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S A C R E D

**B I O G R A P H Y :**

OR THE

HISTORY OF

**JESUS CHRIST.**

BEING

**A COURSE OF LECTURES,**

DELIVERED AT THE

*SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.*

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BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

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THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION.

COMPLETE IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

*John viii. 58.*

*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.....Revelation i. 8.*

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Luke ii. 1, 14.—And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed, (and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David.) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings



of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

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Luke iv. 13, 32.—And when the Devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee ; and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.



and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, ye will surely say unto me this proverb, physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, verily, I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

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Luke iv. 16, 22.—And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the



prophet Esaias : and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

### LECTURE XIII.

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Luke iv. 20, 32.—And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son ? And he said unto them, ye will surely say unto me this proverb, physician, heal thyself : whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land ; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet ; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine : for his word was with power.



And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak : for they knew that he was the Christ. And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place ; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also ; for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

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John ii. 13. 17,—And the Jews passover was at hand ; And Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting : and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen : and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables : and said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence ; make not my Father's house, a house of merchandize. And his disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

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John ii. 18, 25.—Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ? Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ? But he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men : and needed not that any should testify of man : for he knew what was in man.



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LORD'S SUPPER.*

1 Corinthians xv. 35, 44.—But some men will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

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John iv. 46, 54.—So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. The noblemen saith unto him, sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith, unto him, go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him,



And he went his way. And as he was now going down his servants met him, and told him, saying, thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

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Mat. viii. 5, 12, and Luke vii. 1, 10.—And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, and Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said to them that followed, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.—Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then



Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one go, and he goeth; and to another come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And they that were sent returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

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John vi. 1, 14.—After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were deceased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, there is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore



they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.



## SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

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### LECTURE I.

*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things, were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life : and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God ; even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father,) full of grace and truth.—JOHN i. 1—14.*

**T**HE idea of a beginning involves that of antecedent existence, from which that beginning originated. The



beginning of a man's life implies parentage ; the being of a tower of a city, necessarily supposes a pre-existent head to plan, and a hand to execute. The vast frame of Nature must have had its commencement from a preceding skill to contrive, and a power to perform. The Mosaic account of the Creation is the only one that sound reason can admit. If GOD created the heavens and the earth, GOD was before the heavens and the earth. Moses the historian, and John the evangelist carry us back to one and the same era, carry us up to one and the same all-wise, all-powerful Being. Nature and Grace issue from the same source and tend toward the same grand consummation. The prophet and the apostle employ the self-same terms to describe the same objects. "He that built all things is GOD."

It has been remarked that the four Evangelists introduce their great subject in a retrograde series of representation. Matthew's gospel opens with a display of the Saviour's humanity, and presents us with his descent as a man. Mark conveys us back to the age of prophecy, and "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" is traced up to the predictions of Malachi and Isaiah. Luke the beloved physician refers us to the Levitical priesthood, to the altar of incense, and the services of an earthly sanctuary, "a shadow of good things to come." But John soars above all height ; he recurs to the birth of nature, and ascribes that birth to a pre-existent, omnific WORD, which in "the fulness of time was made flesh, and dwelt among us." We have beheld his glory displayed in the ages before the flood, in the persons and predictions of patriarchs and prophets, by whom "GOD at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers." But Moses and Elias have disappeared, the "voice crying in the wilderness" is heard no more ; it is lost in a "voice from heaven," saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye Him."



We are now therefore to contemplate “him, to whom all the prophets gave witness,” in his own person, doctrine, and mighty works; and, as the order of things prescribes, our contemplation must commence in what he was in the beginning, prior to the lapse of time for “he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” long survived the rest of his fellow disciples. He knew what some of them had written. He lived to see the progress of the truth as it is in Christ. He saw a divine origin of christianity demonstrated by its success, and he became a joyful martyr to the truth which he published to the world. A “brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,” in common with their saints, he retired into exile in “the isle that is called Patmos,” a cheerful victim to “the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” In that sacred retirement, more to be prized than all the blessings of society, he is visited with the visions of the Almighty, and becomes the highly honoured minister of unfolding the character, offices and work of his divine and beloved Master, from the days of eternity to the final consummation, when He who sitteth upon the throne shall say, “Behold I make all things new.” The Gospel according to St. John, and the Revelation of St. John, may therefore be considered as together forming an abstract of the plan of Providence from the first dawning of light upon the world of nature, to the perfect day of “the restitution of all things.” And one and the same agent is represented as the animating principle which is before all, and through all, and in all.

*In the beginning.* The mind, with all its powers, loses itself in surveying the works and the ways of God. I have a dark, indistinct recollection of my first emersion into thought. I can remember some of the impressions made, of the sorrows and joys felt, when I was a little child. Soon after I began to exist, I be-



gan to perceive that I did exist, but for the knowledge of all that preceded, I stand indebted to a father's intelligence, to a mother's tenderness. They were to me the beginning of days and the oracles of truth. Their own pittance of illumination flowed in the same channel. But there must have been a point when thought began. There must have been an intelligence which could communicate the power of comprehension; there must have been a spirit which could breathe into man's nostrils the breath of life; there must have been one without a beginning, to make a beginning. And who He was, the Evangelist unfolds.

In the beginning *was the Word*. Let us not contend about the import of a Greek term. If our evangelist has not an intention to mislead, but one idea can be affixed to that term. He is evidently describing God the creator, in the view of leading us to know and to acknowledge the Redeemer of mankind as one and the same with him. "Who was made flesh and dwelt among us?" Who "came to his own and his own received him not?" Who "was despised and rejected of men?" The *WORD* that was in the beginning, and who has revealed himself by a display of so many glorious attributes. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Is this proposition to be rejected because it is mysterious? For the same reason the system of nature, in whole, and in all its parts, is to be rejected. All is mystery; and all is revelation and discovery, from the insect too small for sight, swimming in a drop of water, up to yonder flaming orb, which revolves at an immeasurable distance over our heads. Is not man a great mystery to himself? But is he to renounce his being because he is unable to explain it? Is he to call the union of matter with mind an absurdity, because their mutual influence escapes his penetration? How many combinations actually exist of which we have no perception, and which we would pronounce to be impos-



sible ! In all the ways and works of the Most High, there is a wonderful mixture of luminousness and obscurity, of minuteness and magnitude, of complexness and simplicity. And Scripture exhibits the connexion of extremes similar to that which is apparent in the world of nature and in the ways of Providence. This is a presumption at least, if not a proof, that they have all one original ; and who can that original be but the divine person emphatically called THE WORD, which existed in the plentitude of power, wisdom, and goodness, “before the world was,” but of whose pre-existent state, very general ideas only are communicated. Indeed none other can be communicated, for when the mind launches into infinity, it is overwhelmed, and lost. If the wisdom which cries, and the understanding which puts forth her voice in the writings of Solomon, be the same with the WORD which was in the beginning, as a comparison of the two passages will render highly probable, we shall have a sublime and interesting idea of this pre-existent state. The evangelist says,

The word *was with* GOD, as the deliberative, active, determining principle of the Eternal mind. The wise man expands the thought, and represents the plans of eternal wisdom as digesting the framing, arranging, supporting, governing, redeeming of a world, as in contemplation. As if admitted into the counsels of peace, he thus unfolds the purpose of Him who worketh all things after his own will, that all should be to the praise of his glory : “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth ; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled ; before the hills was I brought forth : while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the



heavens I was there ; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth ; when he established the clouds above ; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep ; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment ; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him ; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him ; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ; and my delights were with the sons of men.” Thus was the *Word with God* from eternity, taking pleasure in the prospect of the fabric which He was about to rear ; of the creature whom he was going to frame, and whose nature he was in due time to assume ; that he might make the children of men “partakers of the divine nature,” a union as mysterious and incomprehensible as that of soul and body, as that of the persons in the deity, and as evidently matter of truth and revelation as these are.

And the *Word was God*. Here “the disciple whom Jesus loved” recognizes in his Master, on whose bosom he leaned at supper, “all the fulness of the godhead dwelling bodily.” Lest the expression *the Word was with God* might be supposed to imply separation, difference as a man who sojourns *with* his friend is nevertheless a different being from that friend, the evangelist speaks out fairly, fully, unequivocally, the truth which he himself believed, and which he was divinely inspired to deliver to mankind, that they also might believe. If St. John be not in these words delivering the doctrine of the real and proper Deity of Jesus Christ, he is either himself labouring under a delusion, or he intentionally means to deceive, or there is no meaning in language, and consequently no distinct and safe channel of communication between man and man.

*The same was in the beginning with God.* John speaks as a prophet as well as an evangelist. Fore-



seeing that "false teachers" should arise, "even denying the Lord that bought them," he employs a clearness, a copiousness, a force of expression on this momentous point, not to be misunderstood, not to be slighted, not to be explained away. When a master charges his servant with a message of peculiar importance, he repeats it again and again, he puts it into every different form, in order to avoid ambiguity and to prevent mistake. This is evidently the case here. It must not be made a question, "Of whom speaketh" the evangelist thus? "of himself or of some other man?" The identity of the person is ascertained beyond the reach of doubt. He is *the same* before time began its race; *the same* who set time a flowing, *the same* through every period of duration; *the same* under every character and in every condition.

Where is the proof that the Word was God? *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Behold the execution of the eternal plan. The design is copied to an iota. It is the incommunicable prerogative of Deity to create. He who creates cannot be himself a creature. By *the Word* were all things made, the *WORD* therefore could not have been made. What God did by the Word of his power, he did by himself; and "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Mark the universality of this creative energy; *All things* were made by him. The apostle makes a splendid enumeration of those *all things*, in his epistle to the Colossians, ch. i. v. 16. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." Wherever therefore there is created existence, there is omnipotent, omnipresent, creating and sustaining virtue; and there can be but One Omnipotent, Omnipresent. "Angels" are said to "excel in strength," but that



strength is imparted, and it is exerted or restrained by a will not their own ; they “ do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Man is capable of doing great things, but his power is limited to the modification of materials provided to his hand. Christians are indeed said to be “ labourers together with God,” and “ workers together with him ;” it is the highest glory of human nature : but this labouring and working is not in aid to feebleness, it goes not to the production of what had no previous being ; it simply implies the adoption of the same views with God, and the imitation of his works of goodness and mercy. The united powers of angels and men are unequal to the formation of a single atom, for, to the ascription of the creation of universal nature to the Word, John subjoins his exclusive title to the character of Creator : it is a glory which he will not give to any other ; “ without him was not any thing made that was made.” “ He spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast.” “ God said, let there be light : and there was light.” And who but God could thus speak, thus produce ?

*In Him was life.* In the vegetable world, life is a state of expansion, a progress of fructification, a power of re-production, but all issuing in the decay and dissolution of the parent germ. A grain of wheat, in order to vitality, must itself consume. “ That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” It has not therefore life in itself. It was the divine mandate which first generated, and which still supports the wonderful process. “ God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, upon the earth, after his kind : and it was so : and God saw that it was good.” From the same fountain of life proceeded animal nature : “ All sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through



the paths of the seas." A higher species of life issues from the self same source. "The Lord God formed a man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In all these gradations we behold a vital principle, but that principle derived, standing in need of continual supplies, and hastening to extinction. Here we are presented with life underived, needing no external support, inextinguishable. "In Him" supereminently "was life;" a life of which man is in a peculiar sense partaker: *and the life was the light of men.*

"The light of the body is the eye;" and a precious gift it is. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But the faculty of vision, as well as some others, is bestowed in a higher degree of acuteness on certain of the animal creation, than upon man. He however possesses a light denied to the beasts that perish. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," by which he is distinguished from, and exalted far above the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven. And this "light of men" is the gift of Him who "has life in himself." "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"

*And the light shineth in darkness.* Material light necessarily dispels darkness; when the sun rises the shadows flee away. But mental darkness resists the clearest light. The great source of intellectual day has shined through every age and upon every land; but every age and every land have exhibited men grovelling in the dark, wilfully shutting their eyes, and then denying the existence of light. The history of mankind is a melancholy demonstration of this, "and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their



deeds were evil, for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." It is a corrupted heart that disturbs and misleads the intellect. "If, therefore," O man, "the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" On whom does this censure fall? On the ruder nations, and the grosser periods of ignorance and barbarism? Yes, and likewise on periods of illumination and refinement, on nations who, in the pride of their heart, appropriated all wisdom to themselves, and stigmatized the rest of mankind with the name of *Barbarian*; it falls on the boasted ages of Alexander and of Augustus, on learned Athens and imperial Rome. Of them it is that the apostle Paul thus writes: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." This accounts for that earnestness of exhortation employed by the same apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians: "This I say and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Thus though *the Light of the world* shone, and still *shineth*, the *darkness comprehended it not*. On whom does the censure fall? On Pagans of ages past, and on Pagans now "walking in darkness, and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death;" on unbelieving Jews, and the blinded posterity of Ishmael? Alas! "darkness still covers the earth"



of lands denominated *Christian*, “and gross darkness the people” who bear that venerable name. What grievous ignorance have we to deplore! what impudent infidelity, what abounding iniquity, what horrid profanation of the name, of the day, of the book of God! “Sun of righteousness arise” on these sinful lands “with healing in thy wings,” “deliver us from the power of darkness,” that we may be “light in the Lord.”

The evangelist having displayed the glory of the *WORD*, as the source of all being, whether material, animal, or intelligent, adverts to the mission of John Baptist, his immediate forerunner, “the voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God;” the finger pointing to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Paying all due honour to that “burning and shining light” which came in the spirit and power of Elias, he represents him as merely the harbinger of *the LIGHT*, the *true Light*, *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. John Baptist *came for a witness*, and he faithfully delivered his testimony: “He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me; whose shoes latchet I am not worthy to unloose: He must increase, but I must decrease,” as the morning star “hides his diminished head” when the great orb of day appears.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God,” but “the world by wisdom knew not God.” *He was in the world* through the whole extent of its duration, as the all-upholding Word, the all-regulating power, but the men of the world, even “the wise and prudent” discerned him not, acknowledged him not, adored him not. “The fulness of time” at length came. The Scriptures were fulfilled; the day which “Abraham rejoiced to see” began to dawn; the “Star out of Jacob” arose. Surely man will fall down and worship him. They surely, at least, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and



the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came," they surely will flock to "the brightness of his rising." This is a reasonable expectation, but it was not realized. The melancholy fact is, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*, and the prediction is verified by the event; "When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him: He is despised and rejected of men:" they "hid their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not."

This carries us forward, with our evangelist, to the great, the eventful day when *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*. The Scripture term *flesh*, it is well known means *man*, human nature, the human race. Thus in describing the universality of human degeneracy it is said, "All *flesh* had corrupted their ways." Thus, in confidence of divine protection, the psalmist exultingly exclaims, "I will not fear what *flesh* can do unto me." And the prophet viewing the redemption of mankind as co-extensive with mortality, while he declares that "all *flesh* is grass," triumphs in the thought that "all *flesh* should see the salvation of God," To these, innumerable instances might be added to prove that the evangelist, when he says "the Word was made *flesh*" means to convey this idea, that the Word, all-creating, all vivifying, all-illuminating, assumed humanity, "was in the world," tabernacled among men, emitted a sensible glory, "as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;" "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;" "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

And thus, men and brethren, we perceive one and



the same animating principle calling worlds into existence, peopling them with angels and men, communicating intelligence, exercising unbounded empire; and making himself of no reputation, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbling himself to a mean estate, to the suffering of reproach and contempt, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." To what meanness of condition ought not we his disciples, therefore, cheerfully to submit? "For our sakes he became poor," and shall we be ashamed of honest poverty? Did he go by the name of "the carpenter's son," and dare a christian ostentatiously to display the heraldry of his ancestors, or to blush at what the world calls low birth? "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor hid his face from him when he cried," and can one called by his name, turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress, or hide his face from a poor brother? We cannot like him say, "Let there be light;" "Lazarus come forth;" we cannot like him walk on water, or silence the wind; we cannot like him give eyes to the blind, or speech to the dumb. But we may with him be "meek and lowly in heart," merciful and compassionate, forbearing and forgiving: we can go about doing good, and ministering to the necessitous. We cannot attain to the height of his divine excellence and perfection, but we may with him descend to the lowliest offices of beneficence and condescension! we may learn of him to "overcome evil with good."

On the other hand, to what height of elevation may not the christian aspire? Let not the idea of temporal elevation seduce you. Think not of "the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them," which perish with the using. Christ's "kingdom is not of this world." Let not the blind ambition of the sons of Zebedee suggest a dream of right and left hand places by the side of an earthly throne. Be it your study and ambition to "have this mind in you which also was in



Christ Jesus." Let the avarice of the worldly mind accumulate bag upon bag, add house to house, field to field, but let a nobler avarice excite you, the disciples of the blessed Jesus, to "add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." These are the titles, the stars and the ribbons in the kingdom of heaven, and "if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let the spirit of adventure and science discover unknown regions and nations on the globe, and new planets in the firmament of heaven; be it your concern, christian, your study, your employment, to contemplate, through the glass of *promise*, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Suffer the man of the world to enjoy his triumph; suffer him to outstrip his rival, to run down his enemy; be thine the more glorious triumph to promote a rival, to spare an adversary, as knowing that "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Such, disciple of Jesus, be thy holy aspirations, such thy pride and ambition; and may such be thy blessed attainments even in time: thought is lost in contemplating "the glory that is to follow." The beloved disciple shall declare it, in the sublimity of his own conception and expression, or rather in the idea and diction with which the Holy Spirit supplied his pen: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE II.

*Who shall declare his generation.*—ISAIAH liii. 8.

THE history of countries generally commences with a geographical account of their situation and extent ; of the climate and soil ; of the names and the reason of imposing such names ; of the era and the means of discovery ; of the original inhabitants, and of other circumstances tending either to communicate useful information or to gratify curiosity. The biographer, in like manner, in delineating the life of his prince, statesmen, hero or philosopher, usually begins with tracing his pedigree and parentage, and enables the reader to form some acquaintance with his ancestors, in order to introduce the personage himself with greater advantage and effect. But both the general historian and the biographer quickly lose themselves in research. The origin of no nation or individual can be traced up to its source. The light becomes fainter and fainter as we proceed, the object is rendered more obscure and uncertain, till time at length spreads his sable mantle over it, and we behold it no more. Who then shall declare *his* generation, who “ was in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that is made.”

We are advancing, men and brethren, upon holy ground ; ground sacred as Eden’s blissful plains, as the region which surrounded the bush that burned with fire, as Sinai’s awful summit. Borne aloft on the pinions of the celestial dove, we are aiming a bold, adventurous flight into the heaven of heavens, to expatiate



through the boundless regions of eternity, to contemplate objects which “angels desire to look into” to search into the “great mystery of godliness,” to lose ourselves in seeking “to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

We are going to attempt a delineation of the life and history of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men. My heart fails at the thought of the task which I have undertaken ; my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth. Spirit of grace, establish my heart—

.....“ O thou my voice inspire,

“ Who touch’d Isaiah’s hallow’d lips with fire.”

The question of the prophet which has now been read, and which suggested the idea that we mean to pursue through this lecture, is interwoven with a variety of pointed and striking predictions which, whether taken separately or in their combination, can apply only to one person ; and who that person is, no doubt can possibly be entertained when we consider, that this is the very passage of Scripture to which Philip the evangelist was providentially directed, as a text for “preaching Jesus,” to the Ethiopian eunuch. I shall not employ any part of your time in detailing the various opinions which have been entertained respecting the meaning of the passage in general, or the precise import of the term “generation” in particular. The question appears simply to be a bold defiance given to all created wisdom to investigate, to unfold the generation, the origin, the essence of that wonderful person concerning whom such singular circumstances and events are predicted ; it amounts to a strong and positive affirmation that it is impossible to declare Him as he is, to trace his existence through the successive periods of duration up to its commencement, as you may do that of a mere man from the moment of his birth, or through a series of ancestors. What, in this view, is the obvious doctrine of the text ? That the generation of Him who the spirit of prophecy, and the cor-



responding history represent as an innocent, patient, vicarious sufferer, extends beyond the sphere of created nature, eludes pursuit, spreads the glory of eternity around it, and conceals it from mortal eyes. It is worthy of remark, that the genealogy of our blessed Lord's humanity is more clear, and distinct, and extended, than that of any other person. Two several evangelists have declared it, pursuing it through two different, but parallel channels, up to Abraham, and from him up to the common father of the human race. In this respect, therefore, "the Spirit himself helpeth our infirmity;" and he who by the mouth of Isaiah, seems to forbid and defy all inquiry, by the pen of Matthew and Luke, makes a clear and full discovery, and enables us to trace the pedigree of Jesus Christ, like that of any other man. It is the peculiar privilege of the sacred volume to unfold the real history of human nature, of the globe, of the universe, to follow nature up to the hour of her birth, to declare "the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created; in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens;" to exhibit the first man Adam in the plastic hands of the Creator, springing out of the dust of the ground, and, inspired with the breath of life, becoming "a living soul." The same inspired volume represents to our attention one person, and one event, as of peculiar importance; as pervading, influencing, and affecting the whole course of nature and Providence; as contemporary with every generation of men; as looked unto, and longed for by successive ages. In order that the truth of God might be fully justified, and have its complete effect, the relation in which this illustrious person stood to those who had received the promises of his coming, is distinctly ascertained and minutely described; so that at every period of the world we can say, lo He is here, and lo He is there. But the inspired volume likewise represents him as *before* all and *above* all. If therefore this book be a Revelation



from Heaven, it must contain real and important truth, and that truth clothed in plain, simple, and intelligible language; we must perceive, of consequence, in the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” a person whose generation no one is able to declare, who is “before all and by whom all things do consist:” whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship, “the heir of all things,” by whom the worlds were made and are upheld, whose “throne is for ever and ever:” in one word Christ Jesus, “who is over all. God blessed for ever.”

You are well aware that the doctrine, which we wish to establish, is in the present day violently opposed; and while it is maintained in this place, it may be perhaps in the next street the subject of profane mirth, or of serious argumentation—Thinking as we do, we will not enter the lists of controversy. We will not employ your time, nor endeavour to enlist your passions, by running down one name, party or opinion, and exalting another; but will simply and humbly, though at the same time, firmly and unreservedly, propose for your instruction and improvement, what appears to be the meaning and object of Scripture: and, considering the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the first leading object of all Revelation, we will uniformly bring it forward in every discourse. If therefore these exercises are at all frequented, or attended unto, it will be by such as expect, and are well pleased, to hear of the great Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, in his original, everlasting, unchanging glory, and in his humiliation, as the son of man, to the form of a servant, to the death of the cross, a propitiation for sin. To this, we trust, *not unknown* God, our altar is erected, and dedicated, and on it we would again present our whole selves a living sacrifice unto the one true God, and “our Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.”



“Who shall declare his generation?” Incapable thou art, O man, to trace back the short and slender thread of thy own existence and descent. Thou mayest have some faint recollection of weak and dependent childhood; of a father’s early care, and of a mother’s tenderness; of the amusements, the companions, the solitudes, the sorrows and joys of thy boyish days. But all beyond is a blank; to thee creation began a few years ago; the second or third, at most, of thy own immediate progenitors, is blended with the men who lived beyond the flood. We are ignorant of and unknown to each other. How much more so are the men of distant nations and of times more remote? But family tradition, national record, the inspired page can supply the want of personal knowledge, can carry us back to departed forefathers, and bring them down to us. But what recollection, what tradition, what record, can carry us beyond the birth of nature, can convey us to a state of existence previous to the lapse of time? Now the person of whom the prophet speaks, as we saw in the preceding lecture, is *the Word* who spake all things into existence, who built the world, who spread the flood, who set time a flowing, who “breathed into man’s nostril’s the breath of life.” Who then of the sons of men, which of the angels of God shall declare the generation of Him who made them what they are, who placed them in their stations, who prescribed to them bounds which they cannot pass? The slightest detail of nature, O man, presents a mystery which thou canst not solve, a world which thou canst not comprehend unto perfection. That seed cast into the ground cannot be “quickened except it die;” canst thou declare the generation of this insect, to day a butter fly, yesterday a moth, the third day a mere lifeless incrustation, and presumest thou to explain the great mystery of godliness, “God made manifest in the flesh;” at so many different times, in such divers manners made known unto the Fathers by the



prophets ; and in these last days unveiled to us in the person of the Son, the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person ? We repeat the question, understandest thou, and art thou able to unfold, the union that exists in thy own frame, between the clay tabernacle and the immortal mind ; earth and heaven blended in thine own person ? And shall " it be thought a thing incredible," that He who, in the uninterrupted course of his providence, produces this union which every one is conscious of existing, though no one is capable of explaining, should form other combinations, unite other natures, to declare his power and manifest his glory ? Wherefore should " it be thought a thing incredible," that He who unites himself to every one of us, through the medium of reason and conscience, for carrying on the plan of nature, should have united humanity to himself in the person of the Redeemer, in a manner still more incomprehensible, for perfecting the plan of redemption ? Shall I reject as untrue or absurd whatever I do not clearly understand or am unable perfectly to explain ? The consciousness which I have of my own being must be renounced then among the first, and every thing within and around us must be reduced to darkness, doubt and uncertainty.

Blessed Jesus, we cannot declare thy generation, and would not be wise above what is written, but we adore in silent wonder, we rejoice that " the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that men " beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We rejoice that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Suffice it now that " we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man : " that " it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the



Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

We can form no conception of a state pre-existent to this frame of nature, for imagination itself must draw its ideas from reality ; and to give scope to a faculty so fantastical, in treating a subject of such high moment, were presumptuous and profane. Let us reply then to the prophet's challenge, with the modesty and humility becoming creatures so ignorant, so limited, and so imperfect. We presume not to explore the records of eternity, to pry into the counsels of peace, to measure the infinite Jehovah, his nature, his decrees, his operations, by the contracted line of our finite understanding ; but, taking Scripture for our instructor and guide, we will with reverence and joy contemplate the manifestation of the Son of God in the likeness of man, the mystery of the incarnation, his generation as one of our brethren. In the next lecture therefore, if God permit, we will endeavour to lead your attention to some of the remarkable circumstances which immediately preceded the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and which give celebrity and notoriety to that illustrious event, and mark the interest which eternal Providence took in it, and the importance thereby stamped upon it to every serious and reflecting mind.

We conclude at present, with suggesting, from what has been said, and from every view which is given us in Scripture of the person of the Saviour, that there is spread around it at once an effulgence that dazzles and repels, and a mildness and simplicity which composes and attracts. Is he spoken of as a man, we are sent to Bethlehem to behold a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, to Nazareth to converse with the carpenter's son, to Cana of Galilee to join with him in the innocent festivity of a marriage solemnity, to Bethany to witness the endearments of private friendship, to Gethsemane to sympathize with the agonizing mourner, to scenes such as daily occur in human life ; but we are never left long to consider a mere man in situations



and employments like our own, a man of like passions with ourselves ; the glory of the Lord arises, the Son of God stands confessed, a generation not to be declared, a power that nothing can resist, at which devils tremble, which winds and seas obey, to which death and the grave are subservient. He speaks as never man spake, legions of angels are continually on the wing to minister unto him—Prophecy and history represent him in the self same lights, in alternate humiliation and majesty, obscurity and splendour. What a contrast does the description of our prophet present ? “ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” The progress of his history, in every particular stage of it, will elucidate the same observation, and therefore it shall not now be farther prosecuted.

Again, this subject seems much calculated to correct the prejudices which prevail among men in the matter of pedigree. There is in reality no such thing as mean and high birth : or if there be a distinction, to be born perfect in every limb and feature, with a sound and vigorous constitution, with a mind complete in all its faculties, this is to be nobly born : as, on the contrary, to come into the world diseased and debilitated, with a constitution undermined and destroyed by the vice of parents, is to have the disadvantage of being meanly born ; a distinction which, if founded in reason, truth, and justice, leaves the great, in general, little to glory in, and the poor little at which to repine. Have we not all one father ? What genealogy is pure from every stain of infirmity,



folly or vice? Is it any diminution of our Saviour's dignity, any impeachment of his perfect purity, or any imputation on his great public character, that in the roll of his ancestry after the flesh, we find the name of Rahab the harlot, and of her who had been the wife of Uriah, and that he was brought up under the roof, perhaps to the occupation, of an obscure craftsman? Virtue and vice are personal not hereditary, and nothing but vice is a just ground of shame. Shall I call myself a disciple of Jesus then, and think it a reproach to be called a carpenter's son, despised because I am a Galilean, lightly esteemed because my parents were poor and ignoble, because a paltry monosyllable introduces not my name? Real worth ennobles itself independent of the breath of kings, it draws obscure progenitors into light, and leaves a fair and honourable inheritance to posterity—in a bright example, and a respectable name.

Once more, whatever may be our pretensions, or our want of pretension as citizens of this world, we have all equal right and encouragement to aspire after the title and the spirit, and the privileges of the sons of God. He whose generation cannot be declared, is not ashamed to call the humblest of you, brethren. The end of his coming into the world, of his humbling himself to death, of shedding his blood, was to make you "kings and priests unto God and his Father." What he is by eternal generation, that he is making you by redemption, by the spirit of adoption, by the hope of glory to be revealed. Support the honour of your heavenly Father's name, prove your relation, preserve unclouded your prospects. You are now in a state of depression, "in heaviness through manifold temptations," your title lies dormant, your possession is at a distance, but "your life is hid with Christ in God, and when he shall appear, you shall appear with him in glory. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall



be, but when He shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "Fear not," then "little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE III.

*For thus saith the Lord of hosts. Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.—HAGGAI xi. 6—9.*

**T**HE great Lord of nature demonstrates his existence and divine perfection, in the original formation, and in the constant preservation of all things. “He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.” He upholdeth all “by the word of his power.” The continual support of the universe has accordingly, with the utmost propriety, been represented as creation every instant repeated. In a system which is all life and motion, power almighty, and attention unremitting, must ever be exerted to maintain life, to carry on motion, to preserve harmony. Every being is subjected to the peculiar law of its own nature; and the great *whole* is governed by general laws. Unity, simplicity, multitude, variety, strike the eye of every attentive beholder; every individual presents a little world apart, and the vast combination of individuals forms but one world, animated by one vital principle.

But Jehovah makes himself known to his intelligent creatures not only in the stated order and harmony of



his works, but in the occasional and temporary interruption of that order, and in deviation from that harmony. The powers of earth and heaven are shaken ; the sun is turned into darkness, and the stars withdraw their light ; the barrier which restrained the ocean is removed, the windows of heaven are opened, and the earth is overflowed. The rain that falls on Sodom becomes a fiery tide ; the flame of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace is rendered harmless air ; the hungry lion licks the prophet's feet. The glaring eccentric comet, the wandering planet, and the fixed star, all, all refer us to one original, to one moving, restraining, directing, supporting cause.

Neither, however, the regular observance, nor the occasional suspension of the laws of nature are mere wanton displays of power, to amuse the curious, to alarm the fearful, or to confound the proud. Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and every act of omnipotence have an important meaning and design. The end at which the Ruler of the world still aims, is the manifestation of his own glory in promoting the wisdom and happiness of his creatures.

The prophet, in the passage of the sacred volume which has now been read, is evidently referring to some signal display of the divine glory. We behold universal commotion raised and settled by the same power : heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, and all the kindreds of the nations shaken together. Universal attention is excited, universal expectation is raised, and that expectation is completely gratified, by the appearance of " the desire of all nations ;" by the restoration of peace to a troubled world ; by a lustre bestowed on the second temple which should eclipse the glory of the first. Now the expression, " the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts," enables us to fix the period, and to discover the person here described. Haggai lived and prophesied after the Babylonish captivity, and the immediate



object of his prophecy was to urge his restored countrymen to industry and perseverance, in the work of rebuilding the temple of the Lord. And as the most powerful and encouraging of all motives, he is commissioned to assure them, that the period fast approached when the fabric which they were then rearing should be invested with much greater honour, than that of Solomon and all his glory ever possessed. But if this were not meant of temporal splendour merely, the fact contradicts it; for from Ezra we learn, that, in this respect, the former temple was far superiour to the latter; “many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers who were ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice;” so mortifying was the comparison. Our prophet himself holds the same language, ch. ii. 3. “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” We must look therefore for a different kind of glory, to explain and confirm the prediction; and it is impossible to be at a loss about an interpretation, when we consider wherein the real glory of the second temple consisted. Not in being filled, and overlaid with silver and gold, for these are spoken of as comparatively vile and contemptible. “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts,” a claim exactly in the same spirit with that made in the fiftieth Psalm. “Hear, O my people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds: for, every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls,



or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering." But when "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, when burnt-offering and sin-offering were not required, then said I, lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God." This, christians, like the star which conducted the wise men of the east, leads us directly to the Saviour of the world. Would you behold the superiour glory of the latter temple, look to Simeon visiting it, looking and longing for the consolation of Israel; behold him with the babe in his arms, exulting with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in having seen the salvation of God. Look to Jesus at the age of twelve years "sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," displaying at that tender age, a wisdom and dignity far superiour to that of Solomon in his zenith. Look to that same Jesus, in his zeal for the honour of the sacred edifice, purging it of those impurities which a worldly spirit had introduced into it. Listen to the divine eloquence which there flowed from the lips of him who spake as never man spake. Hear him predicting its destruction, and establishing the truth of his own mission in denouncing against it, and devoting it to, total and irrecoverable ruin. Behold Him on those ruins, rearing an everlasting and a spiritual building, on a rock against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; and in all this, behold as in a glass the glory here spoken of, the advent of "the desire of all nations," the "star of Jacob" arisen, *Shiloh* come, to whom the gathering of the nations shall be, "the Prince of Peace," by whom peace is proclaimed, and through whom peace is given to "him that is afar off and him that is nigh."

In order still farther to justify the application of this prophecy to the person and character of the Redeemer, we may inquire into the import of the other expressions



here employed to describe the appearances of nature and providence, which signalized the era of his manifestation in the flesh. “Yet once, it is a little while.” The reign of prophecy was hastening to a conclusion. Haggai was one of the last on whom that spirit rested; with Malachi, who lived probably somewhat later, it entirely ceased; and a dark period of five hundred years without a vision, intervened, till it was revived in one who came in the spirit and power of Elias, the forerunner of the Messiah, “the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God,” Isaiah xl. 3, and it shone in all its lustre in the Messiah himself, “the great prophet that should come into the world.” By him it is here intimated that God should speak “once” for all; that he should be the full and final declarer of the will of God to mankind: “yet once” but no more.

“It is a little while.” With God what is purposed, is begun to be executed, his agents are already at work, time is lost with him who sees the end from the beginning. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;” “beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” The interval between the prediction and the accomplishment, though a period of five centuries, is, in the sight of God, “a little while;” and five centuries, when they are past, are but “a little while” in the eyes of man also. But to what circumstances attending the coming of our Saviour refers the prophet, when he represents the great God as “shaking the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and all nations?” It is well known that the sacred writers frequently employ, by a bold figure, the appearances of the natural world to represent and explain moral objects. In the case before us, it will be found that both the literal and figurative sense of the words are strictly applicable to the subject. Every one, who is at all



acquainted with the history of mankind, knows that the whole course of things has been a constant and successive concussion and convulsion, a shaking of the nations, struggle for dominion, the progress of empire from east to west; and an aspect of the heavenly bodies and influence, analagous to the state of the moral world. The observer of nature endeavours to trace all these up to their native causes in the great system of the universe; the moralist looks for them, in the nature and constitution of man, and the politician, in the combinations and exertions of passion and interest. The believer, the christian refers all to God, sees him in the cloud, in the sky; hears him in the wind, in the thunder, in the songster of the grove: and he sees the swelling tide of nature and providence labouring with one object of peculiar importance; all things are shaken and composed in subordination to the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Let me compress what I mean to say, within a narrow compass: and I shall do it nearly in the words of an elegant preacher whom I have oftener than once had the honour to quote in this place. The eastern part of the world was, in the wisdom of Providence, first peopled, great and extensive empires were first formed there, and there learning and the arts were first brought to perfection. But while science and empire flourished in the east, a power was rising by degrees in the western world, which was one day to surpass all that had gone before it. Unknown to the proud empires of the eastern hemisphere, which vainly flattered themselves that they divided the world amongst them, this power was then silently advancing from conquest to conquest, and the Roman eagle was by degrees strengthening her wing, and preparing to take her flight round half the globe. The succession of those great monarchies, those shakings of the heavens and the earth, this shaking of all nations, led gradually and imperceptibly to that happy conjuncture, that fulness of time, that ma-



turity of divine counsel, which suited the introduction of christianity. They arose one after another, they enlarged one upon another, till at length the genius of Rome, under the permission of heaven, triumphed over and swallowed up all others, and expanded, opened, united, consolidated, that wide extended, well informed civilized empire, through which the gospel of Christ was destined to make a progress so rapid and so successful. To favour this great event, to procure attention to the Author and Finisher of our faith, and to render the first appearance of our holy religion at once more august and more secure, the struggles of ambition, which had so long shaken the world, those restless contests for superiority, subsided at last, suddenly and unexpected, into universal peace. That stormy ocean, which had been for ages and generations in continual agitation, now all at once sunk into a surprising calm; the bloody portal of Janus, which had so long emitted unrelenting destruction to mankind, was shut, and the globe was instantly overspread with tranquillity, relieved from the din of arms, from the confused noise of the warrior, and the horrid sight of garments rolled in blood, in order to receive the Prince of Peace.

The shaking of the nations, as paving the way for the desire of all nations, is striking to the contemplative mind in another point of view. Philosophy rode triumphant, every question relating to physics, morals, politics, science, religion, was freely canvassed: and the noise of the schools in many instances drowned that of the ensanguined plain. The introduction of christianity was preceded by a remarkable diffusion of knowledge, and the radiance of science ushered in the gospel day, as aurora announces the approach of the sun, and prepares the world for it. Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, poured from their separate urns, those distinct rills of science, which meeting in one great channel, became a mighty flood, and overspread the vast Roman empire. And thus was revelation enabled to



give a most illustrious proof of its coming down from above, by diffusing over the world, all at once, a light superiour to all collected human wisdom in its brightest glory. And need we ask who it was that thus shook and settled the sea and the dry land, who regulated the vast engine, who conducted all these great events, and brought them to one issue, concurrence and conclusion? At the same period of time, the promised Messiah came: the greatest empire that ever existed was at the height of its glory: learning flourished beyond what it had done in any former age: and the world was blessed with universal peace. A coincidence of facts, every one of which is in itself so extraordinary that it cannot be paralleled by any other times, clearly points out the hand of that supreme, over-ruling power, who from eternity beheld the great plan of his providence through its whole extent, who alone “can declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done,” saying, “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*”

To put this beyond all doubt, let it be observed, that these events took their rise in remotest ages, and were prepared in times and countries far distant from and unknown to each other. Empire which sprang up amidst the seven hills of Rome; science nurst in the academic groves of Greece; and religion from the obscure vales of Judea, all met at one grand crisis. To one another unknown, they must have been conducted by the hand of Providence. But meet they did, and peace from heaven crowned them with her olive. And thus were the nations shaken, to prepare the way of the Lord; thus “the valleys were exalted, and the mountains and hills laid low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain,” and the high and aspiring thoughts of men were brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

But the heavens and the earth were literally shaken, at the coming of “the desire of all nations.” Wit-



ness that new created star which conducted the eastern Magi to the place where the Saviour was born ; witness the descent of Gabriel and a multitude of the heavenly host, to announce his arrival ; and witness the other appearances of celestial spirits to minister to the Lord of glory in his temptation and agony, at his resurrection and ascension into heaven ; witness the descent of Moses and Elias to the mount of transfiguration ; witness too the eclipse of the sun beyond the course of nature, which marked the hour of his death, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the rising of the dead : witness the voice from heaven which, like thunder, oftener than once, shook the echoing air, while God himself declared his well beloved Son, and demanded attention for him. All these confirm the testimony of the prophet, they point it to the Lord Jesus, and inspire joy unspeakable and full of glory, on discovering the perfect coincidence between prediction and event. To this auspicious, this all important era we are now brought ; and the next lecture, with the divine permission, will detail the remarkable circumstances which immediately preceded, or which accompanied the birth of Christ.

And was all this mighty preparation made to introduce a mere man of like passions with ourselves ? Were the heavens from above and the earth beneath stirred to meet him at his coming ? Did flaming ministers descend singly and in bands, did departed prophets revisit the earth, and the dead bodies of saints arise to do homage to a creature, their equal, their fellow ? It is not to be believed. But surely this is the Son of God ; and to receive him, coming for our salvation, what solemnity of preparation was too great, what homage of angels and men too submissive, what testimony of created nature too ample ? “ Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.”

Is his name and description “ the desire of all na-



tions?" how fitly applied! Is light desirable to the benighted, bewildered traveller in a land of snares and of the shadow of death? Is pardon desirable to a wretch condemned? Is the cooling stream desirable to the parched pilgrim, and bread to the hungry perishing wretch? Is the friendly haven desirable to the tempest-tossed mariner, and liberty to the languishing captive? What then to an ignorant, guilty, perishing world must that wonderful man be whom Providence has raised up to be "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But what if when he shall appear, desirable as he is, a blind world shall see "no form of comeliness in him, no beauty why he should be desired?" Afflicting thought! "He was despised and rejected of men?" "He came to his own and his own received him not." They "denied the holy one, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them." The cry was "away with him, crucify him;" his "blood be upon us and upon our children!" O Lord, remove the film from the eyes of those prejudiced Jews; dispose them to receive "The prince of Peace," let him be all their salvation and all their desire. Lord remove the film from my eyes that I may see in him, whom God the Father hath sent and sealed, one "fairer than the children of men; into whose lips grace is poured:" that though he may be "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, He may be unto us who believe, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Amen.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE IV.

*And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him he was troubled and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, fear not, Zacharias: For thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. But thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.—LUKE i. 11—20.*

“**T**HE prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Being determined through the course of these exercises to avoid every thing that



land which had been for ages so renowned in history seems as if blotted out of the globe; the people, which had been hung up as a sign before the eyes of so many successive generations, seems to be extinguished and lost; the predictions and promises which conferred upon them such high importance, and duration so extended, seem to have been defeated and rendered of no effect. The throne of David, whose permanency was so often, and so solemnly declared, has sunk into the earth and disappeared. The representative of the royal line of Judah is sunk into an humble carpenter: and all hope of revival is at an end. But the Lord hath spoken and shall he not do it, he hath promised and shall he not bring it to pass? Yes, but not at the season, nor in the way which human wisdom would have prescribed, nor by means which human wisdom would have employed. Behold, light once more, and suddenly, shines out of darkness; the land of Israel rises once more into importance; Jerusalem rears her head among the nations, the star of Jacob arises, “a rod springs out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots;” and the glory of the latter temple eclipses that of the former.

The evangelist informs us that at this eventful period, Herod was king of Judea. Princes are often among the inferiour actors in the great drama of Providence. Their will shakes the nations of the earth, but the hearts and arms of kings themselves are in the hands of the Lord, to be by him turned which way soever he will. This man has by some been dignified with the addition of “the great:” an appellation more frequently bestowed as a reward to splendid vice, than as a tribute to modest merit! Herod the great! and yet a paltry substitute of a Roman emperor, a habitual slave to the vilest of human passions, envy, lust, jealousy, cruelty, revenge. The inspired penman gives him no names, either good or bad, but simply tells his story as far as it is connected with that of Him by



whom “kings reign and princes decree judgment.” The reign of Herod to us serves merely as a prologue to introduce the more important name and history of an ancient, obscure priest called Zacharias, and our attention is instantly called away from the splendour, noise and intrigue of a busy, vain-glorious, debauched court, to contemplate the humble concerns of a private family, and the noiseless performance of a religious service.

How different are the ideas affixed to the terms great and little, by sober reason and popular opinion, by the wisdom of God and the folly of man! Weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, Herod fawning on Augustus, or on one of his favourites, dissolved in luxury, stained with blood, inflamed with resentment, is little and contemptible; while the aged priest, reconciled to the will of God, who had written him childless, pursuing the calm tenour of his way, fulfilling the unostentatious duties of his place and station, “righteous before God, walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” commands affection, esteem and respect. This venerable pair, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were both of the tribe of Levi, on which the office of priesthood was entailed. Both nature and religion taught them to consider the gift of children as a blessing; but the hope of that blessing they seem now calmly to have resigned, and they are quietly sinking into the decline of life, if not with the consolation of leaving their name and office to their children, possessing nevertheless that of mutual affection, of a devout spirit and a conscience void of offence. The midnight of nature is the dawning of the day of grace; and he who in wisdom and justice brings to naught the wisdom of the worldly prudent, “raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may sit him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.”



has the appearance of controversy, I take it for granted that you believe and receive the history of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as delivered in the four gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as of divine inspiration and authority. Of the four evangelists two were of the number of the twelve whom Christ called to the office of apostleship, and who recorded events of which they were witnesses and partakers, and transcribed discourses which they heard and well remembered. The other two derived their information immediately from those “who from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word.” Their harmony, in every particular of any importance, is a proof of the truth and certainty of each individually, and of the whole. John, as one borne aloft on the wings of an eagle, ascends into the heaven of heavens, and begins his account of his beloved master with a sublime and interesting representation of his divine nature ; for which we refer you to Lecture I. Mark introduces “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,” with the voice of a lion “crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Luke ushers in the great prophet, “the desire of all nations,” with an account of the conception and birth of his forerunner John the Baptist, and is of course led to extract the commencement of the evangelical, out of the legal dispensation : and he sets out with exhibiting Zacharias in the exercise of the priest’s office. Matthew commences at once with the history of Christ’s humanity, as the son of David, the son of Abraham. For these reasons, the four sacred historians of the New Testament dispensation have been distinguished by corresponding symbolical representations, analogous to the vision of the prophet Ezekiel, Matthew by the face of a man, Mark by that of a lion, Luke by that of an ox, and John by that of an eagle.

St. Luke was by profession a physician ; he became



early a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and he is generally supposed to have been one of Christ's first disciples, and of the number of the seventy whom "He sent out two and two in every city and place, whither he himself would come." After he had concluded the history of our Lord himself, at the period of his ascension into heaven, he undertook that of the acts of the apostles, and he addresses both his books to a person of amiable character and exalted rank, named Theophilus, and in him to every lover of God, in every age of the church, who is desirous to know, "the certainty of the things wherein he has been instructed." On the conversion of St. Paul to the christian faith, he seems to have attached himself with much zeal and affection to that great apostle of the Gentiles, he became voluntarily the companion of his travels and afflictions, and brought down his history to his arrival at Rome as a prisoner, on an appeal to the emperor Nero. His gospel and history of the acts were probably submitted to the inspection of his illustrious fellow-traveller, and received the seal of his approbation. In the preface to the gospel inscribed with his name, he modestly, yet with firmness, lays claim to the great, the essential qualification of a historian, namely, accurate and complete information respecting his subject, "having," says he, "had perfect understanding of all things, from the very first:" and the professed end which he had in view is no less worthy of a great and enlightened mind, that a respected friend might be established in the knowledge, faith, and hope of the gospel. The tongue of prophecy had now been silent for more than four hundred years. The last word which it had spoken announced the sending of Elijah the prophet, to precede the great and notable day of the Lord, to work a remarkable change in the temper and character of mankind, to prevent the earth from being "smitten with a curse."

A period of darkness and disorder succeeded. The



The prince of peace is ready to make his public entrance on the grand theatre, and it is time for his har-binger to prepare the way, and for the herald to announce his approach. And where shall we look for him? Turn your eyes to Judea, to Jerusalem, to the temple. See, the lot is prepared, to determine whose turn it should be to burn incense before the Lord in the holy place. Providence presides over it, and Zacharias is taken. Behold him, with joy, accepting the sacred task of paying a grateful tribute of praise to God, and of assisting the prayers of the people without, with the commanded perfume of the altar of incense. Behold him entering within the veil, under the mixed emotions of godly fear, and exalted delight, to worship that God who once resided there in sensible glory, but from which the glory had long departed. All is solitude and silence; the unextinguished light that burnt continually before Jehovah lends its flame to set on fire the incense, when lo, the lustre of material fire is lost in the brighter glory of the great archangel, and the solemn silence is broken by the melodious accents of a celestial voice. Gabriel who, five hundred and forty years before, announced to the prophet Daniel the commencement of the determined weeks which should precede the Messiah's day, now announces to Zacharias their consummation. He opens the sealed book of prophecy, and to his astonishment informs him that the promised coming of Elias, with which the ancient canon closed, was near at hand: that this great prophet should appear in the person of the son of his own, whom God by a special dispensation of his providence was raising up to fulfil the Scriptures, to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, "to go before the Saviour in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." How is the pride of kings levelled to the dust before an ap-



pearance like this! How many princes and potentates have arisen, and fallen, and sunk into oblivion since Gabriel last visited the earth! How have the kingdoms of this world been shaken during the course of five centuries! How often has the seat of empire changed, and the globe changed its inhabitants! but the heavenly messenger enjoys unfading lustre and undiminished strength. The purpose of the eternal has been proceeding all the while, and the convulsions and contention of the nations have been working the righteousness of God, and preparing the way for the kingdom of peace and love.

The appearance of an angel, however, though sent on an errand of mercy, though delivering a message of grace from on high, is an object of terror to frail mortality. "When Zacharias saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him:" and if the upright and blameless man tremble at the presence of an angel, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear," when "the Lord himself shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God and obey not the gospel!" The triumph of goodness is the glory of a really superior being. The angel that "stands in the presence of God," exults not in the confusion of a frail mortal, but said to him "fear not, Zacharias." The insolence of superiority, and the delight of outshining, of dazzling, of distressing an inferior, are the characteristics of a little soul, of some angels falsely so called; those who are truly such, condescendingly sink to the level of those who are beneath them, or affectionately raise the humble up to their own. In the presence of God all distinctions vanish, Gabriel and Zacharias are fellow creatures, fellow servants, fellow dependants; the inferior being makes himself known by his timidity, the superior by his benevolence and love: this marks the difference, the affecting difference which purity and guilt have made.

The flaming minister addresses the attendant on the



earthly sanctuary, with all the familiarity and ease of ancient friendship; the desires of his heart, the subject of his prayers are well known to him; he has all along been the sympathizing, though unseen, unknown witness of his anxieties and distresses, and he esteems it an honour and a happiness to be employed as the messenger of glad tidings to a pious, suffering human being. Zacharias had long ago ceased from expecting, had ceased from praying for the building up of his own house, but he waited for the consolation of Israel, he continued instant in prayer for the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David which was fallen down, and lo, God at length bestows, as he did upon Solomon, not only the blessing which he asked, but that also which he asked not; namely, a son to support the honour of his own name, and the promise of the Son that should be born, the Child that should be given, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. The injunctions of the law respecting Nazarites are repeated and applied to the present case, and the future greatness and importance of this miraculous child, in the scale of Providence, are foretold; and Zacharias has the satisfaction of hearing that he was to be the father of him who should be the accomplishment of ancient prophecies, "The voice crying in the wilderness," the finger to point out to mankind "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Terror gives way by degrees to feelings of a different kind, and, with the glory of the heavenly vision before his eyes, with the faith of father Abraham, in similar circumstances, as encouragement to his own, and with the manifold instances which the history of his own country afforded of similar interposition, he converses with flesh and blood, he staggers at the promise through unbelief, and for a moment forgets that with God all things are possible. The angel vouchsafes to explain himself to the unbeliever; his incredulity shall not frustrate the purpose of Heaven, nor



even divert into a different channel the mercy which he doubted; but his frailty shall not go wholly unpunished, he shall be wounded in those faculties which he had so ill employed as the avenues to his mind, the tongue which dared to express the language of doubt and suspicion must undergo a temporary silence, the ear which would not admit the communications of an archangel, shall be shut for a season against the delights of social intercourse, and the sign which he unwisely demanded shall bear upon it a mark of displeasure. Striking mixture of goodness and severity, of goodness unbounded, and severity restrained! Striking view of the supreme power possessed and exercised by the great Lord of nature, over all our powers and possessions. He who bestowed the gift of speech on man can withdraw it in a moment; or confound it so as to be no longer a medium of communication between mankind: he can confer it on the dumb ass to reprove "the madness of the prophet;" or instantaneously communicate it, in all its different forms, to the ignorant and illiterate, for the instruction and salvation of the various nations of the earth. Let a gift so precious never be vilely profaned as an organ of falsehood, pride, lust, or profanity.

The words of the angel all meet their accomplishment in their season. The pretended oracles of paganism were constrained to veil their prophetic enunciations in terms of mystery and obscurity; they spake with timidity and caution; they clothed their responses and mandates in general and ambiguous expressions, which superstition might interpret what way soever it would; and which any event might be wrested to justify and support; but the lively oracles of God are minute, distinct, intelligible and pointed; he who runs may read them; they clothe predictions with such an exactness of circumstance: they appeal to events so near at hand, so obvious to investigation, that it is impossible to mistake one thing for another, to confound



one with another. Zacharias's dumbness, the season of his being attacked with it, the unexpected, miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth, the birth of the child according to the time of life, the sudden restoration of the father's hearing and speech, at the very moment predicted, were all matters of public notoriety; every one singular in itself, the whole taken in connexion so singular, as to mark the interest which eternal Providence took in an event, at first sight, of no great general importance, but in its effects and consequences involving the fate of nations, the everlasting destination of worlds.

What! all this state and magnificence; the trumpet of prophecy resounding, the prince of angels descending, to proclaim the advent of merely a man with raiment of camels' hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins! The ruler of the universe, be assured, is not so lavish of extraordinary displays of his power and wisdom. If the true God appear, it is on an occasion worthy of a God. And if this be the preparation made for the appearance of the servant, what state shall precede the entrance of the sovereign? Gabriel, I foresee has another message to bring, a multitude of the heavenly host is on the wing, to announce a greater than John Baptist, even Him of whom John Baptist himself says, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not? He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose." This solemn preparation for the manifestation of God in the flesh, if God permit, will be the subject of the next lecture. I now conclude with the following reflection:

1. Angels, we perceive, take a lively, an affectionate, and a compassionate interest in the affairs of men. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The "little ones" of Christ's family, the little in age and stature, the little in condition, must not be despised, "for I say unto you," are his emphatic words, "that in



heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven :” and “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” What condescension on the part of beings so highly exalted ! What a protection provided for the feeble ! What encouragement proposed to the penitent ! “The angel of the Lord encamped round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” Pleasing, awful thought ! The host of heaven guards my path and my bed, watches over my lying down and rising up ; but their eyes are continually upon me, I am “compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses,” they bear testimony to what I am, whither I go, how I am employed. Is the eye of a child a guard to virtue ? What holy circumspection and watchfulness, then, what earnestness and perseverance in well doing, what abhorrence of that which is evil, ought the inspection of an angel, ought the all-seeing eye of God to produce ? “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways ;” “keep,” therefore, thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are all the issues of life.”

2. From a preparation thus solemn and magnificent what are we not to expect ? Four thousand years have been employed in making it ; a procession of patriarchs, of prophets, of sages, of priests, of potentates, has passed on before in uninterrupted succession ; angels have descended from heaven : Surely He who thus cometh is the Son of God. “When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, “And let all the angels of God worship Him :” And “unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom :” for “Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” “His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the



God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things : And blessed be his glorious name for ever and ever ; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen. ’

3. Though predicted events are strictly conformable to the word of prophecy, they nevertheless, in many cases, contradict, disappoint and far exceed human expectation. The prophets themselves had not always a distinct and complete perception of the object which they were commissioned to hold up to the eyes of the world. Those “ holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The agents employed in the accomplishment of promise and prediction, little understood the part which they acted. They thought of nothing less ; they intended nothing less. They were unconscious instruments in the hand of God to execute a purpose, which had they known they would have striven to defeat. “ The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed.—He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : The Lord shall have them in derision.” Were “ Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, gathered together” to promote the cause of christianity ? No, they meant to destroy it. But “ of a truth” Lord, they were constrained “ to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” Happy are they who, with Gabriel and the other flaming ministers who stand before God, are the conscious, the voluntary, the joyful agents under, and together with God, in promoting the great work of salvation.

4. Let not man, then, presume to make his own understanding the measure of revealed truth, or of divine conduct. “ Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or who being his counsellor hath taught him ?” It ill becomes a creature conscious to himself of so much weakness, of so much ignorance, of such liableness



to error, to erect himself into an infallible judge. "Search the Scriptures," but with reverence, with humility, with a desire to be instructed, not censoriously, self-sufficiently, not to wrest Scripture in favour of a preconceived opinion, or long established dogma. Study the ways of Providence ; but dare not to interpret them according as passion or prejudice may dictate. "Thy ways," O God, "is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, and Providence of Providence ; and "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Practical conformity to the divine will is preferable to the highest attainments in knowledge, and it is the most direct road to farther discovery.

5. Superior beings are now an object of terror, and it is conscious guilt in which man clothes them with that terror. They are our friends, they take delight in ministering to our necessities, they cherish the gracious affections of elder to younger brethren, yet the apparition is formidable even to a Zacharias. But "there is no fear in love ; for perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." To that glorious perfection the christian is encouraged to aspire. We shrink from the idea of a visit from a departed friend arising out of the grave, but we look with hope and desire to the day when we shall be added "to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven—and to the spirits of just men made perfect." The vision of one angel, in our present state of depression, strikes the mind with awe ; but we hope to come "to an innumerable company of angels ;" nay "to God the judge of all," for we come through "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "Now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE V.

*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary: For thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.—Luke i. 26—33.*

**E**VERY thing in nature, we have observed, is revelation and discovery, and yet all is mystery inexplicable. Every flower of the field, every pebble in the brook, every leaf on the tree, every grain of sand on the sea shore, is a world in miniature, possessed of qualities which a little child is capable of observing and of comprehending; yet at the same time containing hidden treasures which no Solomon can find out unto perfection. One object overwhelms us with its magnitude, the minuteness of another mocks our research. The Creator here, involving himself in clouds and darkness, eludes our pursuit; there, arrayed in “light in-



accessible and full of glory," He forbids our approach. In all the ways and works of God, there is a simplicity level to the meanest understanding, and a complexness which confounds the most acute and enlarged. If all nature and Providence present this strange mixture, is it any wonder if we find it in the work of redemption? That grand era, called in Scripture "the fulness of time," was now come; even the time for accomplishing ancient predictions and promises; for displaying and fulfilling the purpose of the Eternal, in the salvation of mankind, by him to whom all the prophets give witness, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen.

In order to introduce him with more than royal state, God shook the Heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land; the Gentiles pressed toward the appearing of this great light of the world, and kings to the brightness of his rising. To prepare the way of the Lord, throne was shaken after throne, empire swallowed up empire. Alexander carried his all-conquering arms into the remotest regions of the east; Cæsar extended his conquest as far as to France and Britain in the west; and Augustus gave peace to a troubled world. We are now led to attend to the minuter circumstances of this all-important event.

We perceive from the beginning, what we are never permitted to lose sight of to the end, a magnificence that dazzles, connected with a plainness and simplicity which interest and attract the heart; declaring at once the Son of God and the son of man; Him whom angels worship, and whom the poorest of mankind consider as one of their kinsmen. Observe the exactness of arrangement in every part of the plan of Providence. Time is settled to a moment, place to a point. No design of heaven can be accelerated or retarded, changed or frustrated. God said unto the serpent in the day that man by transgression fell, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise



his heel ;” and it is not an unmeaning, lifeless sentence, filling up space in the sacred page. Lo, it awakens into animation and energy, not one tittle of it shall fail.

To accomplish it behold Gabriel is again on the wing ; but not armed with a flaming sword to guard the way of the tree of life, but bearing the olive branch and the message of peace, announcing a new and living way into the holiest of all, into the paradise of God. If there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what was the joy of heaven on that day when the great archangel received his commission to revisit the earth, to convey the glad tidings of great joy. The celestial bands adoring, prostrate themselves before the eternal throne ; contemplating this new creation of God, the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. These things they have for ages and generations been looking into, the great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh : they enjoy the exalted delight of beholding it unfolded, and the time, the set time, to favour a perishing world arrived. Gabriel has received his instructions ; he flies with transport, such as angels feel, to execute the will supreme ; the flaming portal flies open ; myriads of pure spirits celebrate his descent with songs of praise. And whither does he bend his flight ? To learned Athens or imperial Rome ? To give understanding to the prudent, or to hold the balance of power ? No : but to bring to naught the understanding of the prudent, to humble the mighty and confound the proud. He is sent to a country favoured indeed of nature and renowned in story, but sunk in the scale of nations, the skeleton of ancient grandeur, and to a district of that despised country proverbially contemptible, and to one of the least of the cities of that region, and to one of the poorest and meanest of the inhabitants of that city—to a virgin indeed of royal extraction, but fallen into indigence, betrothed to an obscure mechanic, a stranger in a strange place. It is thus that God chooseth



“ the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things which are.”

The destinations of the Almighty, stamp a dignity and importance on persons, places, and things, which they possessed not before ; to be employed of him is the highest dignity which the creature can acquire ; to minister to him, in ministering to the objects of his compassion or of his love, is the glory and joy of angels and archangels. Galilee and Nazareth now possess an eminence unknown to the most illustrious kingdoms and the proudest capitals. He maketh his angels *spirits*, but we discern, and reason, and converse through the medium of sense. Men cannot rise to the level of angels, but angels are permitted, for wise and gracious purposes, to descend to the level of men, to assume an organized body, to convey their ideas in the accents of the human voice. But can this be a degradation of their superior nature ? No : it is its glory and perfection. To descend to those who are below us, to aspire after greater resemblance to those who are above us, in this consists the real excellency of a created being. We cannot imitate angels in their intelligence and elevation, but in their condescension and humility we may, and we ought.

What a contrast have we here between the rank of the messenger and of the person to whom the message is addressed ! But the presence and purpose of God, level all distinction. Mary, the mother of our Lord, rises, and Gabriel sinks, for the Son of God himself, the Lord of angels, is about to “ take upon him the form of a servant.” The evangelists are minutely particular in detailing the circumstances which concurred to impress the characters of truth and importance on this event. This spirit of prophecy had lately and unexpectedly been revived in the persons of Simeon and of Anna, and of others who were waiting for the con-



solation of Israel. The extraordinary case of Zacharias and Elizabeth, which was well known to all who attended the worship of the temple, must have excited the public attention and expectation. This is followed, six months after, by a case still more extraordinary, more out of the course of nature, and of still higher moment, and of equal notoriety. Opportunity was thereby afforded to the suspicious and incredulous to inquire and examine; that inquiry must lead to the discovery of a cloud of witnesses, lying dormant in books universally held sacred, but neglected, misunderstood and misapplied: life and substance, meaning and lustre, are in a moment given to them by well known and undeniable facts. No appearance of art or industry is discernable, but a simple, easy, natural transition from one thing to another. The appearances, indeed, are out of the ordinary course of nature; but they are narrated as mere ordinary things; and the descent of an archangel, and his speech and demeanor are described with no more parade of words, no more labour of thought, than the springing of an ear of corn, or the fall of a sparrow to the ground.

This majestic, dignified ease marks the presence of God, with whom nothing can be extraordinary or miraculous; who exhibits persons and events as they really are, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The angel represents none but objects of the highest interest and importance. He announces the approach of a great prince, who should ascend the throne of David, who was to exercise unbounded authority, and enjoy everlasting dominion; who should be distinguished by the state and title of the Son of the Highest; and that this extraordinary personage should be introduced upon the grand theatre by the Almighty's creating a new thing upon the earth. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called



the Son of God." The singularity of this wonderful conception and birth was greatly heightened by having been prefigured and foretold at sundry times, and in divers manners; such as the preternatural birth of Isaac, of Jacob, of Sampson, of John Baptist, and the express and pointed prediction of Isaiah, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emanuel," God with us. All these hold up to us, through a succession of ages, the substance of the first threatening to the serpent, which was at the same time the first promise of grace to mankind was made, that He, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and who should bruise the serpent's head should be in a proper and peculiar sense the seed of the woman. Astonishing and instructive view of the undeviating steadiness of the divine counsels! He willeth and none can let it; heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away, but every one come to pass in his season.

Mary having been referred to her cousin Elizabeth, whose advanced state of pregnancy was to be an additional confirmation of her own faith in the promises of God, as soon as the angel departed from her, retired from Nazareth into the hill country of Juda to salute her kinswoman, and to confer with her on the several manifestations of divine favour to them. This interview produced another declaration of the interest that providence took in the event which was pressing to its accomplishment; Elizabeth is not only destined to be a mother in Israel, a mother of John the Baptist, but she becomes already a prophetess; she has a sign given her in her own person equivalent to the declaration of the archangel. "And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, blessed art thou among women, and blessed



is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." This fills the virgin's mouth with a song of praise dictated by faith, piety, humility and gratitude; and these are the rapturous strains which flow from her lips. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

The course of nature now takes place, and he who made man, the first man Adam, perfect at once, from dust of the ground, and who is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham, raises up first John and then Jesus in a way at once miraculous, and natural, according to the way of sovereign, irresistible power, and according to the time of life. Glorious in establishing and supporting the laws of nature, glorious in suspending and dispensing with them, we behold thee, O God, subduing all things to the counsel of thy will, that all should be to the praise of thy glory. At the end of three months more, Elizabeth, as it was predicted of the angel, is delivered of a son: the name of John, as the heavenly messenger directed, was im-



posed on him, the father's speech was suddenly restored, and the first use which he makes of it is to celebrate the high praises of that God, who had made him such an illustrious example of both mercy and judgment. He "was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people. And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God: whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And now the way is prepared, the voice is heard crying in the wilderness, the forerunner of the Lord has begun his course, the Saviour comes. But other messengers, of whom we have not yet heard, precede him. Behold yonder comet glare in the eastern sky, it performs a track untrodden before, the wise men of distant lands are summoned to meet him at his coming, to lay their gifts at his feet; Augustus Cæsar, the sole regent of half the globe, is pressed into the ministering train, an unconscious, unintentional servant to the prince of the kings of the earth.

But here we must once more pause and inquire, Is this a cunningly devised fable, or a real history? Is it a



fanciful representation, or the simple truth? If it be a fine tissue woven by a luxuriant imagination, say so at once, unbeliever, and renounce the fiction in whole, as a rule of faith, or as a ground of hope. Say unreservedly that the mission and message of the angel is merely a bold eastern metaphor: and the whole mere ordinary facts, related with somewhat more than the usual pomp of diction, but to set forth only a man of like passions with ourselves, whom the credulous, prejudiced and illiterate are disposed to receive as a superior being.—In a word, give up the evangelists as plain men conveying, to plain men like themselves, simple matters of fact, and recur at once to unmixed, undisguised deism. But are these things indeed so? Were angels sent from God to declare the approach of what prophets had of old predicted? Did the Son of the Highest vouchsafe to be born of a Woman, and thereby become partaker of flesh and blood, David's son, yet David's Lord, then let earth prepare to receive its king. Lo, the angels of God worship him. He is the Son of God, he is our Lord, and let us worship him.

This history assists us in correcting the false scale of human greatness. Here we behold the princes and the potentates of this world sinking to their proper level; Herod, Augustus Cæsar, and persons of their character and station are thrown into the back ground of the piece, while Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary are brought forward with honour, and to fill a higher destination than that of kings. Respect, by all means, the powers that are, as the ordinance of God, but respect with higher, with supreme veneration, Him who ordained them, to carry on the purposes of his wisdom and his love.

Learn, christian, to make a just estimate of thy own importance in the scale of being. Thou art a creature of God, formed after his image, a partaker of immortality, destined to glory and honour. An origin so dignified confers true nobility; faculties so superior, pros-



pects so extended, denote a being of high estimation in the sight of God, and who ought to be of high estimation in his own eyes. Defile not that fair temple, discredit not that illustrious descent, dishonour not a father's name. But well does it become a creature so dependent, so frail, so fallen, so lost, to be clothed with humility. O man, thou standest in need of every thing ; what possessest thou that thou didst not first receive ? Thou hast been forgiven all ; by the grace of God thou art what thou art. The religion of Jesus Christ alone effectually teaches a man to descend without degradation, and to raise without pride ; reduces him to the level of his natural guilt and misery, and exalts him to the glorious liberty, and the heavenly inheritance of the sons of God.

We have here a preternatural, a miraculous conception. It reminds us of our common origin, of our common feebleness, of our mutual connexion and dependence. God “hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth,” Every man therefore is a brother, and bound to entertain the affections, and to perform the part of a near kinsman to every man. This consideration I press upon you in the words and the spirit of the apostle of the Gentiles : “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For, as we are many members in one body, and all members have not the same office : so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith ; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth, on teaching ; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation ; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ; he that ruleth, with diligence ;



he that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another !”—“ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate”—“ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” “ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

The subject of the next lecture will be the history of the nativity of our blessed Lord, and of the more remarkable circumstances which accompanied that all-important event. May what has been spoken become “ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.” Amen.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE VI.

*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord—And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace; good will toward men.—LUKE xi. 1—14.*

**F**ROM the first instant of time until now, every instant has been displaying some new wonder, unfolding



some new design of the eternal mind. God gives the word. Light arises, the earth emerges out of ocean, the firmament is expanded, sun, moon, and stars appear, nature teems with life, man starts up out of the dust, rears his erect form to heaven, shines in his maker's likeness; the creator contemplates the progressive glories of his power, and pronounces every thing good. The Lord gives the word, and ocean again covers the earth, chaos and ancient night resume their empire, the breath of every living thing expires. Again he sends forth his word, the windows of heaven are stopped, the seas retire to their appointed bed, the dry land appears, the bow is seen in the cloud, the sign of God's covenant of peace. The period of every event is settled to a moment, the instrument is provided, the hand is prepared. But of all the events which have taken place since the beginning of the world, the most illustrious and important surely is that recorded in the words now read. The moment of every child's birth, is highly interesting, at least to the mother—The birth of an heir, to a title, to an estate, to a crown, is felt by thousands, by regions, by empires.

Here we have the birth of the "first among many brethren," of the heir of all things," of "the Prince of the kings of the earth." Toward this eventful hour, time, from the first dawn of light, began to flow in one rising, swelling tide, here it came to its fulness, and hence it began to bend its awful course to lose itself in eternity again. Toward this, as to their common central point, all the powers of nature are attracted; from this, as from the sun the central light of the universe, glory is in all directions diffused. In the birth of this wonderful child, all the children of men who lived before, or who arose after it, have a serious, an everlasting concern. Is it any wonder, then that by so many signs in heaven and signs on earth, that by the tongues of prophets, the decrees of princes, the revolutions of empires, the descent of angels, the finger of God should have pointed it out to mankind?



The evangelist, at the beginning of the chapter, conveys us to Rome, the proud and puissant mistress of the world; the enslaver of the nations, sinking, sunk herself into slavery. From what particular motive we are not informed, nor is it of much importance to determine, Augustus Cæsar thought proper to issue a decree for making an exact enrolment of all the subjects of his vast empire. A vain-glorious monarch, who could exultingly call a subjugated hemisphere his own, might be prompted by pride to ascertain the number of slaves destined to obey him. As it was the boast of this magnificent prince that he had found Rome a city of bricks, and was leaving it a city of marble, the splendour of the capital was no doubt extracted out of the reins of the provinces, and enrolment probably was intended to precede taxation. However it was, and on whomssoever beside the decree of the emperor fell, it affected one little, poor family in circumstances of singular delicacy, and fell upon it with uncommon severity. Behold the messenger of Cæsar at the door of an obscure carpenter at Nazareth of Galilee, summoning him with all his family to repair to his native city, to be enrolled in their proper district: and as the commandments of kings require haste, and do not always stoop to consult the feelings of the humble and the miserable, he must depart on a moment's warning, with his tender companion, now in the last week of pregnancy, poor and unprovided, to a home from which he had been long exiled, and to visit kinsmen to whom he had become a stranger.

But this removal was wholly ordered by the supreme will of Heaven. The Son of David, who was to re-establish his throne, could be born no where but in Bethlehem, the city of David. Thus the great Ruler of the world had willed, and thus prophecy had declared. And thus Cæsar was merely the unconcious, unintentional minister of the son of Mary; furnishing a link to the chain of evidence respecting the truth and



divine original of christianity, and exhibiting an illustrious instance of the sovereign control which the great Jehovah possesses and exercises over the counsels of princes, the convulsion of nations, the fate of worlds.

We hasten from proud Rome to humble Nazareth, from a haughty despot, to uncomplaining sufferers, from unfeeling power, to patient submission. Behold that delicate woman, in the most delicate and interesting of all female situations, forced from home, constrained to undertake a painful and anxious journey, in a condition which rendered ease, and attention, and tenderness, and the accommodations of sympathy peculiarly desirable. See her advancing by slow and distressing stages, towards the residence of her forefathers, once illustrious, but now fallen into decay ; to the city of her ancestors, but not to receive the attendance of royal state, not to usher into the world the heir of David's throne, amidst the prayers and expectations, and kind wishes of the myriads of Israel : No, not so much as to enjoy the consolation and support which even the poor enjoy in such a case, to deposit the solicitude of approaching child-birth in the bosom of a fond mother or sympathizing friend ; alas, not even to partake of the ordinary conveniences which a traveller has reason to expect, the general hospitality and mercenary comforts of an inn : but to know the heart of a stranger, to swallow down the bitterness of neglect, to feel the insult of the proud, and the merciless pity of the mean. “ There was no room for *them* in the inn.” Bethlehem was crowded with guests ; but lo, the lineal heirs of the royal house of Judah, in the city of David, are so unconnected, so forlorn, so friendless, that not a door will open to let them in, not a tongue say “ God relieve you” as they pass by ; and so poor that an apartment in the stable is all the accommodation which, by intreaty, or promise, or by presenting the face of misery, they are able to purchase.

The inevitable hour, to which nature at once looks



with hope, and shrinks from with horror, overtakes her; and unsupported, unassisted, as it should seem, she brings forth her first-born son, and is able at once to perform the earliest duties of a mother. "She wrapped him in swaddling cloathes," and with the humility and resignation becoming her destitute condition, "laid him in the manger," leaving it to Providence to unveil its own secret counsels and accomplish its own gracious purposes. And thus the Saviour of the world entered upon that state of depression, poverty, and suffering, which terminated only with his life.

But the affectingly humiliating scene in the stable at Bethlehem of Judah, is relieved by the glory of the Lord shining round about it. That babe, neglected, unknown, despised, outcast of men, is declared, by the concurring testimony of patriarchs and prophets, of angels and men, by the shaking of the heavens and the earth, of the sea and the dry land, to be "the Son of the Highest." His parentage, his name, the time and place of his birth, the condition of his infant hours, have all the seal of heaven upon them. For what end did Isaiah prophecy, Alexander conquer, and Augustus give laws, but to point out to the world the instant, the spot, the descent, the estate in which the Son of God assumed our nature, in order to enter on the work of our redemption.

Preparation is making in another quarter of the globe, to bring a tribute of praise to the Redeemer of mankind. The east is ready to contribute its gifts, is preparing its gold, and frankinsence, and myrrh, to lay them at his feet. The wise men of distant nations, occupied in the study of nature, and attentive to the signs of the times, are awakened to inquiry by a silent but shining monitor. The appearance of the starry heavens was well known to them, they can calculate the distances and revolutions of each little star that sparkles in the expanse of heaven; but in a moment



all their science is confounded, all their experience is overthrown by the appearance of a new created light, in motion and at rest by a law peculiar to itself, to fulfil a transitory indeed, but a most important purpose, and which having pointed to "the place where the young child lay," is blotted out of nature, and disappears for ever.

Now none of "these things were done in a corner." Christianity did not steal in upon the world, without warning; all characters and descriptions of men were called in to give testimony to it, and without acquaintance, concurrence, or co-operation they establish the same truth. The eastern Magi on their arrival at Jerusalem, and on explaining the reason of their journey thither, are not treated as visionaries, who dreamed of things that never existed, but are listened to and respected as reasonable men inquiring after important truth. The attention of Herod, and of all Jerusalem with him, is roused; that jealous and sanguinary tyrant, takes every precaution, sets on foot every inquiry that his reigning passions could suggest, to elucidate the case; to secure possession to himself, and to crush every rival. He summons the chief priests and scribes of the people, consults them respecting the determinations of prophecy, as to the birth-place of the expected king of the Jews, he compares their opinion with the report of the wise men, and acts upon the result of that comparison. A coincidence of persons and circumstances so striking, and all relating to one person and one point, must lead to the acknowledgment and adoration of that God, in whose hand are the hearts of princes, the deliberations of councils, the number and motions of all the host of heaven. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names; great is our Lord and of great power; his understanding is infinite." Augustus Cæsar, Herod, the Magi, the Jewish Sanhedrim, the inhabitants of Bethlehem, of Jerusalem, all concur to give witness to



yonder babe laid in a manger, and they involuntarily assist in demonstrating the certainty of those things wherein ye have been instructed: that ye might have strong consolation in having fled for refuge to the hope set before you.

But higher testimony still than that of the potentates of the earth is given to the Lord of glory. Angels descend with songs to meet him at his coming; the gloom of night is dispelled by celestial radiance; Silence, well-pleased, hears the sweet melody of angelic notes, chanting the glad tidings of great joy, "unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The harmony of a thousand heavenly voices in chorus join to celebrate the advent of the prince of peace; to announce to a slumbering world Him in whose light they shine, by whose power they are supported, in whose praise they unite, to whose will they are devoted. What a wonderful contrast! A deserted, friendless mother, a helpless infant, a stable, a manger! What humiliation, like this humiliation! A throne above the heavens, the homage of princes, the effulgence of a star to mark the way to his cradle, the adoration of the glorious host of heaven, the arm of the Lord revealed! What design but the salvation of a lost world, what event but the birth of a Saviour, what person but the Son of God, could warrant all this display of majesty and might? Christian, keep these astonishing extremes continually in sight. This is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; "as children are partakers of flesh and blood he likewise himself also took part of the same; verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The subject teaches us,

1. How incompetent judges we are of the ways and



works of God. Few events, if any, correspond to our preconceived opinions of them. From the glimmering that we have, without any light at all save the sparks of our own kindling, we take upon us to arrange and decide, and to limit the holy one of Israel. Like Naaman the Syrian, we have settled the mode of cure in our own mind, dressed it in proper parade and ceremony, and fall out with the prophet because the simplicity of the process confounds the airy vision with which our imagination had amused itself. Not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God, the carnal Jews had dressed out, for Messiah the prince, a throne like Solomon's, of ivory overlaid with gold, had placed him at the head of armies, had surrounded him with guards, had crowned him with laurels. When the event belied their groundless expectations, with Naaman they turned away in a rage, saying, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" "Away with this man, crucify him, not this man but Barabbas."

2. Observe here in how many instances God writeth vanity on all the glory of man. In the pride of their hearts, the princes and potentates here mentioned, vainly imagined a prostrate world to be all their own. Every will must bend to theirs; to their pleasure every power and possession must minister; all the while they are the mere attendants on the royal state of the real prince. Their names are indeed some of them still had in remembrance, but their power is annihilated, their consequence is swallowed up, or if any remain, it is derived from the relation which it bears to the superior, the commanding, the undiminished importance of Him to whom they gave witness, and whose state, inspite of themselves, they continue to support. The empire of Augustus speedily fell under its own weight, and the downfall of Rome quickly followed that of Jerusalem, and both approved the truth, and power, and justice of God: while that child born, that Saviour given, holds undivided empire, and exercises unbounded sway. Eighteen



centuries have confirmed, not shaken his authority, and time has discovered another hemisphere, far more extensive than the former, and added it to his dominion. Let us again sing, "His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Amen and Amen.

Augustus, in the pride of his heart, and an abject world in flattery to him, prefixed his name to the age in which he lived—and let this piece of vanity have its scope. With the classical, philosophic scholar, let the Augustan age boast of a Cicero, a Virgil, a Livy, a Mæcenas; the humble christian will rather glory in its having produced light from heaven, which eclipsed all human eloquence and wisdom in their highest splendour, and, resigning to the schools their favourite historians, orators and poets, will rejoice in revolving in their place the hallowed page of Luke, the beloved physician, and in listening to the fervid, native, inartificial eloquence of Paul of Tarsus, and above all, in attending to the dignified wisdom which flowed from the lips of him who "spake as never man spake."

3. Finally, this wonderful child born teaches us the value and importance of little children. What human sagacity could penetrate the thick cloud which shrouded his nativity? What but the spirit of prophecy could draw aside the veil which concealed his future eminence? What but a Simeon could discern in him the salvation of God, and foretel that "this child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which should be spoken against?" And who but He who "declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;*" who but He knows what the infant, now drawing its first



breath, is one day to become? What dormant powers may there lie hid! What a germ of wisdom ready to expand! What godlike faculties, which are at length to astonish, to delight, to bless mankind! Watch over the expansion. The precious seed is sown by the hand of the creator. Mark its springing: mark its progress. God has done his part, parent, master, minister, see that thou dost thine, "It is not the will of your father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

The next lecture will have for its subject the history of the infancy and childhood of Jesus Christ. May he who condescended to become a little child for our sakes; who, as He "went about doing good," encouraged the approach of little children, saying, "suffer them and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of God:" may he bless us with the spirit of adoption, and endow us with the lovely simplicity, the docility, the submissiveness of little children, that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven. Amen.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE VII.

*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon him—*  
LUKE xi. 40.

**O**F all the wonders presented to us in the world of nature, man is the greatest wonder to himself—His body dust of the ground, and mouldering back to dust ; reduced to the level of the beasts of the field ; but that dust animated with the breath of life, a living soul, exalted to the rank of angels, an emanation from God himself. In him are blended, in a most wonderful manner, three distinct kinds of life, forming one glorious individual, formed “ after the image of Him who created him.” As the tree in the forest imperceptibly rises, increases from lowness and feebleness to stateliness and strength, and having attained full maturity imperceptibly decays, so the feeble infant gradually increases in stature, changes the grovelling into the erect form, rears his head to the vault of heaven, exulting in the greatness of his strength ; he begins to verge towards decay, he bends to the ground from whence he was taken, and at length sinks into it again. But he is not like the plant rivetted to one spot, unconscious of existence, incapable of self motion. With the other animals around him, he feels himself among his fellows, he rejoices in society, he possesses consciousness, he is directed by motives, he aims at a determinate end. But he is not, like the beasts that perish, impelled by instinct merely, the slave of appetite and sense. To the animal, the



goodness of the creator has superadded the rational life, the faculty of contemplating that great universe of which he constitutes a part so essential, the capacity of rising from the effect to the cause, from the work to the author : Man enjoys the gift of speech, whereby he is rendered capable of communicating his reflections and reasonings, of forming combinations of power which awe, control, and direct the subject world.

To mark the progress of a human being is an interesting and delightful employment—to observe how the limbs acquire firmness and strength, how the mental powers unfold themselves, and all the passions of the man, in succession, stand confessed. See the fond mother bending with delight over her infant, at first a little pliant lump of animated clay, every power lying dormant save one, that of drawing its nourishment from her breast. By and by the eye begins to feel and follow the light, the slender neck strengthens and sustains the reclining head ; the babe smiles, and the parent's heart is overwhelmed with joy. Now he can distinguish the face of her that suckles him from that of a stranger, at least she flatters herself he can, while the soft murmur of infantine satisfaction expresses his gratitude. The figure by degrees becomes erect, every limb is in motion, the uncertain tongue attempts to imitate the sounds which strike the opening ear, and the feet press downward to the supporting earth ; tremblingly he totters into walking, and stammers into speech. The powers of recollection and comparing appear, the symptoms of passion becomes visible, love and aversion, desire and gratitude. The moral sense at length begins to dawn, and the man in miniature finds himself a limited, dependent, subject, accountable being ; hence hope and fear, self-complacency and remorse.

We are this evening to contemplate infancy and childhood in their loveliest and most attractive form, and in their most interesting and affecting circumstances. Look yet again to Bethlehem of Judea, and behold



the nothingness of human greatness; the offspring of kings a stranger in his paternal city, the heir of David without a place where to lay his head, a sovereign destitute of all things. When God, at the fulness of time, sent forth his own Son, as he was made of a woman, so was he “made under the law,” subjected to all its rites and restraints however painful and humiliating, and the Saviour of mankind, that he might fulfil all righteousness, and become a perfect pattern of obedience, first passively submitted to every ordinance of religion, and then by an active and exact conformity, magnified the law and made it honourable.

The minuter circumstances of this period of our blessed Lord’s life are not left on record; those excepted which relate to his public character and divine mission, for as to these Scripture is most exact and particular. Of the progress of his infant mind no traces remain; not a word is said even of the beauty of his person; though the general terms which the evangelists employ, warrant us in thinking, that never in child born of a woman did such early dawnings of superior wisdom appear, that never was human form so perfect. The modest reserve of the historians of Jesus Christ, in this respect, seems to minister a severe reproof of the ridiculous details to be found, in modern biography, of infantine actions and sayings, the supposed prognostics of future eminence and distinction. We can forgive a fond mother, nay love her the more for the amiable weakness, when we hear her repeat the pretty sayings, interpret the significant looks, and describe the wonderful deeds of her soul’s darling; but it excites pity, if not an ungentler feeling, to be told gravely, from the press, of the insipid nothings which a great man said and did, when he was an ignorant and silly, perhaps a pert and petulant boy, who probably merited correction where he obtained praise.

Of our divine master, we are told what was done to him, not what he did; what was said by others concern-



ing either himself or others. And thus was he early an instructor of parents to abstain from partial and excessive admiration of their children, and to little children to cultivate that modesty, docility, and humbleness of mind, which are the real ornament and honour of their tender age. Behold in him then, parents, children, a helpless infant at the disposal of others. It is of importance to the world to know that, at the appointed period, the terms of the Abrahamic covenant were complied with; that the name of JESUS was given him, according to the direction of the angel; that as the first born of his mother, being sacred to God, he was solemnly presented to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem; for these things admonish us of the divine truth and faithfulness in keeping covenant and promise with his people, and of the right which he has to expect, and require faithfulness and obedience on their part; of the character and offices annexed to that sacred, precious and venerable name, and of the self-dedication which not the first-born only, but even all owe unto God. On the eighth day, then, he was circumcised, and named, according to the commandment, and on the fortieth day he was presented with the accustomed offering in the temple.

Providence lays hold of this latter occasion to procure a noble testimony to the high rank and character of the Son of God. The spirit of prophecy had lately revived, and many in Jerusalem were "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and considered it as near at hand. Of this number was a just and devout man named Simeon, to whom it was communicated by a special revelation, that, old as he was, his eyes should not be closed in death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Heaven directed he goes up to the temple, probably to entreat the speedy accomplishment of this gracious promise, at the very instant when the ceremony of the law was performing, and the spirit that was upon him instantly points to Jesus as the fulfilling



of the world to which God had caused him to hope. Filled with holy joy he takes the expected child into his arms, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, blesses God, saying, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." He then points him out to the bystanders as the person spoken of by ancient prophecy, "who should be set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken against;" a prediction descriptive of the reception of the Messiah should meet with from that world which he came to redeem. The same important truth is immediately confirmed by an ancient prophetess, who, coming in the instant Simeon had done speaking, gave public thanks likewise unto the Lord, and "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Thus He, whose birth-place was determined many ages before, by prophetic illumination, whose natal hour was announced by one angel, and celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host; to whose feet a company of shepherds is led, with their simple offering, by a voice from heaven, and to whom eastern sages are conducted by an extraordinary star, is in the most public place of resort in the Jewish metropolis, declared aloud, a few weeks after his birth, at a public religious service, by testimony on testimony, the accomplishment God's great purpose of mercy to mankind.

While so many illustrious personages were producing their concurring evidence to the truth as it is in Jesus, exalting him to endless honours and universal dominion, one is cruelty plotting his destruction. Agitated by jealousy as groundless, as it was barbarously pursued, Herod determines to crush at once this pretender to a throne, whom so many signal and splendid appearances in heaven and earth were striving to dis-



play in superiour glory. To make sure of his blow, his dark remorseless mind enlarges the circle of suspicion from a few days to two years, and from a single feared, hated individual, to all the male children of a great city. Humanity sickens at the thought of the dreadful tragedy of that day, when "in Rama a voice was heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not." By aiming at too much, the tyrant misses his aim altogether. The vigor of his pursuit exerted in one direction, confined to one object, might have overtaken it; but extending the sphere, dividing the pursuit, "the captive of the mighty is taken away, and the prey of the terrible is delivered, for thus saith the Lord, I will contend with him that contendeth with thee." And how was this deliverance effected? Providence employs not extraordinary means, to fulfil its designs, wantonly and unnecessarily, but makes ordinary instruments to produce mighty events. The bloody intention of Herod is hardly conceived in the gloomy hell of his own breast, than it is seen of that eye which nothing can escape, and no sooner is it seen than prevented. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Joseph is admonished of the danger which threatened the child's life, and warned to shun it, by fleeing into Egypt. Thus at every stage of his life, was the Saviour of mankind hated and persecuted of men: thus the all-wise ruler of the universe knows how to deliver, and finds a way to escape; thus He "confounds the wisdom of the wise, and brings to naught the understanding of the prudent."

By a strange, perhaps unaccountable direction of the supreme will, the land of Egypt frequently serves as an asylum to persecuted goodness, protects and cherishes the precious seed of the church. Thither Abraham flees from the pressure of famine, and is thence dismissed with riches and honour. Here Joseph finds



refuge from the malice of jealous and cruel brothers ; from hence Jacob and his starving family are repeatedly fed. Here sprung up Moses, in times of extreme danger and distress ; here he was miraculously preserved, and reared to unexampled eminence and usefulness. Here Israel miraculously increases into a great nation, and from hence triumphantly departs ; and here, finally, He whom all the rest prefigured, and in whom their several glory united as in their centre, sought and found protection from the rage of an incensed king. This too was ordered of Him who seeth the end from the beginning. He went down into Egypt that in his return the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "out of Egypt have I called my Son." Surely, O Lord the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou "shalt restrain."

A veil is drawn over the sojourn in Egypt, and it were presumption to attempt to draw it aside : neither is it possible exactly to ascertain its duration. The infamous Herod meanwhile paid the debt of nature, leaving behind him a name loaded with the execrations of the age in which he lived, and with the detestation of every future generation to which the history of his enormities shall descend. His death was the signal of return to the land of Israel ; but prudence suggested the retirement of the poor and despised town of Nazareth, as a residence more suitable to the circumstances of the times, than the noise and hurry of a metropolis, the seat of faction and intrigue, or the suspiciously observed city of David, to which the jealous eyes of successive tyrants had been attracted by well known prophecies and by recent portents.

As the place of Christ's birth, so that of his upbringing was prophetically marked, not indeed by any particular text that appears in the sacred code, but by its whole spirit and tenor, which represent him as voluntarily submitting to every species of reproach and indignity ; the carpenter's son, a Galilean, a Nazarene,



can any good come out of Nazareth ! It was in this obscure village, of a region of a conquered country, proverbially contemptible, that the childhood of Christ passed unseen, unnoticed of the great world ; but carefully observed of an attentive mother, who, to the tender solitudes of that relation, was inspired with hopes, and animated with prospects, and torn with anxieties which no mother before or since ever could know ; there this wonderful “ child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom,” exhibiting unequivocal signs of a superiour nature, without courting the public notice, or attracting premature homage ; and thus humility, from the beginning and throughout, marked the character of the condescending friend of mankind, who became of no reputation, sought not glory of man, took on him the form of a servant ; he “ strives not, nor cries, neither doth he lift up his voice in the streets ;” and from the return out of Egypt, which was probably not beyond his second year, up to the twelfth, history is entirely silent as to the particulars—but O how much is conveyed in the strong general terms employed by inspiration, to impress on our hearts the discovery and progress of these veiled ten years. May not the history of them be one of the precious arcanæ which “ the father hath kept in his own power,” and reserved for the information, wonder and joy of an improved state of existence, when things hard to be understood shall be fully explained ; and things known in part shall be unfolded in all their connections and dependencies ; and infinite intelligence shall supply all the deficiencies of human understanding.

It was in that fameless village, and in those trackless years that the foundation was laid of a greatness which should eclipse all created glory ; of a kingdom that should swallow up every other ; of an enterprize which should extend its influence to the remotest ages of eternity.

The next lecture will, if God permit, take up the



next recorded period of our Saviour's history, his assuming for a moment a public character at the age of twelve years, and his sliding away from it again into silence and retirement. till his thirtieth year, the time of his final manifestation unto Israel, as the great "prophet that should come into the world."

Shall I degrade my subject, by saying it suggests to parents many useful hints respecting the early treatment of their children? Be as tender and attentive as you will; listen to the voice of nature and learn your duty; but dream not of making a stranger bend the knee to your idol, perhaps he has an idol of his own, weak, silly and ridiculous as yours; perhaps he sees nothing but impertinence and imperfection, where you behold only grace and loveliness, and the more you force your Dagon upon his attention, the more hideousness and deformity he will discover in it. Be not eager to bring forward the accomplishments of your child. If they are worthy of being seen, your reserve and the child's modesty will give a glow to the colouring which will strike every eye. and please every heart. If they be trivial, why will you force a good-natured looker-on to flatter your vanity at the expense of his own judgment; or provoke a stern and severe one, to approve his sincerity and truth at the expense of your feeling and of your idols fancied importance? In private let the person most dear to you, be most dear to you; in society, the darling object, the first in consideration and affection, ought to be the last in respect of attention.

Be not over anxious about an early crop from your offspring. You may have the fruit, it is true by means of vehement cultivation, a little earlier in the season, but it savours of the artificial heat that hurried it forward; the tree is wasted and fades before the time; and the proper season when nature is clothing the vigorous plant with its golden harvest, the languid child of art stands lifeless and leafless, expiring before



its time. There is always danger from a premature spring, though it be in the course of nature. Happy is the man who can hit the temperate mean betwixt indecent haste and indolent delay. I would address a few words to the same effect, to advanced childhood and early youth. But childhood and youth are not disposed to attend serious lectures, or do not understand, or disbelieve, and therefore do not attend to them.— They must be left to the forcible, the irresistible lessons of experience. I earnestly recommend them to the teaching of God's good spirit : May the Son of God, who vouchsafed for our sake to pass through infancy and childhood, poor, neglected, unknown, guard our helpless infants, direct our thoughtless wayward children, counsel and instruct manly matured reason, and smile with complacency on the hoary head, and make it a crown of righteousness. And to God in Christ be ascribed immortal praise. Amen.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE VIII.

*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding, and answers. And when they saw him they were amazed: and his mother said unto him son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business? and they understood not the saying, which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.—LUKE xi. 41—52.*

**U**NIVERSAL nature is progress, succession and change. We observe it in every thing around us, we feel it in every particle of our own frame. But ob-



vious as this progression is, in its larger portions, the minuter details defy the closest attention of the acutest eye. Darkness has evidently given place to light; but what vigilance of inspection could ascertain the precise instant when night ceased and light began to dawn! That plant is palpably increased in strength and size, but let me hang over it the live-long day, with the unremitting penetration of an eagle's eye, and I am incapable of catching a single step of the progress. Shade melts imperceptibly into shade; the transition is made, but we are not aware of it; whether we be asleep or awake, careless or attentive, the great complex machine keeps in motion, performs its revolution, produces its effect. The progress of man, the most perfect of all creatures that we are acquainted with, is the most interesting of all objects to man. If it be delightful to behold the trees of the forest burst into verdure, and those of the garden putting on their beautiful garments, and changing that beauty into fruitfulness; if it be pleasant to behold the springing corn multiply thirty, sixty, a hundred fold; to behold the flocks and herds increase—what must it be to behold the image of God multiplied on the earth, the human form divine rear itself toward heaven, the powers of thought and reason expand.

—————By degrees,  
The humble blossom blows; and every day,  
Soft as it rolls along, shews some new charm,  
Then infant reason grows apace, and calls  
For the kind hand of an assiduous care,  
Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,  
To teach the young idea how to shoot,  
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,  
To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix  
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

THOMSON'S Spring.

But this like every other human delight, is blended with pain, even the partiality of parental affection is constrained to observe rank and noisome weeds



springing up with the delicate seeds of goodness; the dawning of reason is obscured by the clouds of folly and vice, and the promise of a golden harvest is blighted in early spring, by late frost or premature heat. Before we are well awake to the joy of some newly discovered excellency, we are overwhelmed with the distress of perceiving some glaring imperfection, or ungracious propensity: and where we love and rejoice, there also we find a cause to lament and condemn. The spirit of God has seen meet to present the world with one perfect model, for the instruction of every age of human life. We have held it up in a state of infantine beauty, simplicity and gentleness, a passive example of subjection to poverty, and danger, and persecution; but we have seen the meanness and obscurity of that state relieved by the decided attention of eternal Providence, and by the voluntary homage of angels and men.

On returning from Egypt, Jesus was carried to the obscure village of Nazareth, and the veil is drawn over him till his twelfth year, when he was pleased to clothe himself for a little while with majesty, and then disappeared, till the time of his final manifestation to the world, as the Saviour of it. The law obliged every male of Israel to appear before the Lord in the place which he had chosen to put his name there, three times every year, at the three great feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles. This was evidently intended to maintain a good correspondence between all the members of the commonwealth, by the social intercourse, the innocent festivity and the devotional exercises which these solemnities promoted.

Joseph and the mother of Jesus, though the injunction extended not to females, were in the habit of regularly attending the service of the temple on those occasions; and Jesus, another "Nazarite God from his mother's womb," accompanied them to the holy place. Self-evident marks of the favour of heaven



were already upon him. "He grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom." Expressions importing uncommon comeliness of person, and superior powers of understanding; but in Him, as in other children, we behold a gradual progression from knowledge to knowledge, as from stature to stature. For as nature conceals from us at what moment she unites the immortal mind to the mortal frame, so the Holy Spirit has thought proper to conceal at what season, and in what measure, Deity was pleased to unite himself to the human nature of the Redeemer; and let us not over-curiously seek "to know the times and the seasons which the father hath put in his own power." Neither the lovely form, nor the attractive goodness, nor the excellent wisdom, however, of this wonderful child, seem to have aroused much attention or commanded uncommon respect. The world is captivated not by real and solid worth, but by the gaudy outside of shewy, superficial qualities. Rank and riches spread a glare over the person of their possessor that makes it known and remembered: they add weight to his most ordinary sayings, which gives them currency and importance; while poverty, like a bushel put over a candle, prevents it, however clear it may be, from giving its light. What carnal mind can reconcile the idea of great and distinguished qualities with that of the carpenter's son? No, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

In those stated journies to Jerusalem, it was customary for many families of the same neighbourhood, or of the same kindred, to travel in company. The road was sweetened and shortened by friendly communication, and religion strengthened the bands of friendship and the ties of blood. Were there no other reason but this to press upon the heart the importance of attendance on the ordinances of God's house, that it serves to strengthen the bond of nature between hus-



band and wife, parent and child, one neighbour and another, it were enough to recommend it to every one who prizes the comfort of the life that now is ; how much more, when there are involved in it, all the infinitely more important interests of that which is to come ! Happy are those societies in which the powers of a world to come are so felt, as to shed a sweetening, cheering, enlivening influence over present connections, enjoyments and pursuits. The solemnities of the feast being ended, all prepare to return to their respective homes and their usual employments. Thus wisely and mercifully, He who knows what is in man makes devotion, labour and rest, alternately to recommend, to relieve, and to support each other. A perpetual sabbath would soon prove the death of religion ; under uninterrupted labour, the man would quickly sink ; rest protracted beyond a certain bound would prove destructive of all repose. But to the heart in which the love of God is shed abroad, the painful toil of the week is mitigated and diminished by the prospect of the day of sacred intermission, of heavenly communication ; and the calm, satisfying delights of the Lord's day, bestowing ease on the body, and composure on the mind, serve as a restorative toward undertaking and undergoing the fatigues of another week.

The numerousness of the company which travelled back to Nazareth prevented its being observed that one was wanting, and a complete day's journey is performed, before the eager, attentive eye of even a mother, misses its darling object. How is this to be accounted for ? The whole train was a band of brothers, of one heart and of one soul ; in whatever part of it the child was, behind or before, he was encompassed with friends : other children of twelve years old need attention, protection and support, but he has given many unequivocal proofs of a wisdom capable of conducting himself. The time is now come that his mother herself must learn with whom she had to do, and to revere



in her own son, the Son of the Highest. All was of God, who thus prepared the way for another public declaration of the great Prophet who should come into the world, and that not by the tongue of an archangel, nor by a multitude of the heavenly host, but by the mouth of Jesus himself; into whose lips grace was poured and praise perfected. It is easier to conceive than to describe the sorrow and anxiety occasioned by the discovery that Jesus was not in the train. The shades of night spread over the soul of a mother the terror of evil beasts, of evil men; of hunger and cold, of missing the road, and of all the nameless apprehensions which solicitous parents feel for unprotected youth and innocence. Nothing remains but to tread back their weary, anxious steps, and the close of the second day sees them enter Jerusalem, with the mixed emotions of hope and despondency; and another sleepless night succeeds the painful day. The third day, well knowing the zeal which he had for God's house, they repair betimes to the temple: they find him, think, O mothers, with what astonishment and delight, in health, safety and composure, and gracious heaven! how employed? "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." Painters and commentators seem to have entirely mistaken this passage of our Saviour's history. They place him in the centre, in the chief seat, assuming authority, instructing grey hairs. The evangelist places him in the modest seat of a pupil, a pattern to children of twelve, of docility, of humility, of meekness; carefully listening to the questions proposed to him by the public teachers, and answering with deference and submission, though with intelligence and decision; and proposing, in his turn, questions that led to important truth and really useful knowledge, not such as displayed the acuteness of him who interrogated, or that aimed at exposing him of whom the answer was demanded. In truth ever since I could read and understand the words of



the historian, I have considered this little anecdote of our blessed Lord, as of singular importance in his character, as the great teacher of mankind. The age of twelve is an interesting crisis in human life. The rational soul is then shaking of the child, and emerging into the man. There is about that period, knowledge enough to minister fuel to vanity and self-conceit, but not enough to discern ignorance and folly; there is learning sufficient to tease and perplex, but not to attract and conciliate affection. And did it please thee, meek, and condescending Jesus, to instruct that wayward season of existence, when youth begins to feel the force of example, to blush at petulance, to be influenced by honest shame and honest praise, that season when the heart is awake, alive all over to the bitterness of censure, or to the sweets of approbation? Yes, and we see in thee with wonder and joy the happy medium between the firmness of conscious wisdom, and the frowardness of assumed superiority: between the meekness and gentleness which are the inseparable concomitants of real ability, and the self-sufficiency which betrays want of talents, supporting itself by extravagance of claim. That this is the just view of our blessed Lord's conduct is evident from the effect which it produced. You need not to be told of the jealousy of aged and professional men. Not a doctor in the temple but would have felt and resented the mortifying superiority of a child, had that superiority been ostentatiously displayed; but his whole deportment excited only admiration and love; his understanding was equalled only by his affability and condescension; he at once instructs his teachers and gains their good will; "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."

If strangers were thus moved by a mild display of early unaffected wisdom, what must a parent have felt, whose heart but a moment before was throbbing with anguish unutterable? How happy is she to acknowledge



such a son, the delight of every eye, the theme of every tongue. But even Mary, the mother of Jesus, is weak and imperfect, she speaks unadvisedly with her lips, she presumes to mingle upbraiding and reproach with expressions of endearment and exultation ; she has forgotten from whence she received him, the character given him of the angel before he was conceived in the womb, the sacred names which he bore, the testimony which God had so repeatedly given to his beloved Son ; she addresses him, all wonderful as he was, if he had been merely an ordinary child, who had thoughtlessly and wantonly rambled away from his parents, and had given them unnecessary trouble and pain, He whose every word, every action had an important meaning and design. “ Son,” says she, “ why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” And now the answer of Christ to this question unfolds the great end which he had in view, through the whole transaction. It was time for him to assert his divine original ; and the meekest and most submissive of all children stands invested with divine majesty, “ how is it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my father’s business ?” or, as it might perhaps with greater propriety have been rendered, “ in my father’s house.”

What a lesson is conveyed to the world in this reply ? Sacred is the authority of a mother over a son of twelve years of age, but there is an authority still more sacred, of which a child even of that age may be sensible. When the honour of God is concerned, the voice of nature must be suppressed. When the voice of heaven calls, the decencies and civilities of life must give place, and all secondary obligations and considerations must be swallowed up of the first. He silently endured the reproach of being called the carpenter’s son by strangers, but his own mother must denominate him what he is, and what she knew him to be. But reproof of a parent must be insinuated, not



brought directly forward ; and here again the pattern is perfect ; delicacy and firmness unite to spare the mother, yet reprove the offence ; and whatever were the other questions and answers of this celebrated conference, those which are on record will remain an everlasting monument of the perfect union of wisdom and harmlessness, which distinguished the Son of God from every other.

The sun, having shone forth in his temporary effulgence, again hid its face in clouds, and submitted to an eclipse of eighteen years longer ; He divested himself of all authority ; He sought not glory from man ; He became of no reputation, He took on him the form of a servant. “ He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them ;” and by this voluntary humiliation of himself, by this retreat into the shade, more than by ten thousand precepts and arguments, He has inculcated the practice of humility on his disciples. A few short words contain the history of many years, even so, holy father, for it seemed good in thy sight ; “ Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Let us not presume to draw aside the veil which infinite wisdom has spread, nor seek to be wise above what is written, these things the angels desire to look into, and some of these things, though now they are hidden from us, we may be permitted to know hereafter.

About the period of this passover, when Christ was shewing himself in the temple, after this extraordinary manner, as the Son of God, Augustus Cæsar, the emperor of Rome, dies, and is succeeded in the throne by Tiberius. About six years after, Josephus, called Caiaphas, was made high-priest of the Jews, through the partial favour of Valerius Gratus, the Roman governor. Towards the end of the twelfth year from that period, Pontius Pilate was sent in Palestine as procurator of Judea, in the room of Valerius Gratus, and John Baptist entered on the exercise of his public



ministry. These names are now stripped of all their glory ; those stations are now fallen into disuse, those events are now stripped of all their importance, save what they derive from the relation which they bare to yonder babe in the stable, that child in the midst of the doctors, that gentle, obscure, unassuming youth of Nazareth of Galilee. So differently do objects weigh when examined by the scale of the world, and tried by the balance of the sanctuary. In the next lecture we will proceed, if God permit, to the history of Christ's baptism, and of the illustrious testimony then given from the most excellent glory to Jesus Christ, as God's well-beloved Son.

“ Let us with Mary keep all these sayings in our heart.” Let us, from the example of this pious pair, regularly attend the worship of God's house, “ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves as the manner of some is :” and thus shall we “ go from strength to strength” till we appear before God in Zion. Let us carefully attend to the proper mode of treatment of children, suited to age, to capacity, to temper and disposition. The discipline adopted to childhood is by no means suited to a more advanced state : and when the youth has become a man, and “ put away childish things,” he must be treated as a man. It is of importance to know when the stimulus, when the bridle is to be employed. What would overwhelm the timid, may prove hardly a curb to the headstrong ; the slow of speech and understanding must not be urged into the speed of the acute and impetuous. Parents rejoice in a forward display of faculties in their children ; they encourage it, and they not seldom repent it. The opposite error is not common, and is therefore less an object of caution. The difficulties which daily present themselves, in managing the progress of the human mind, are frequently insurmountable by the ordinary powers of man, which therefore stand in need of the illumination of “ wisdom from above ;” “ if any of



you," then, "lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Let the young be instructed how to rise into eminence and distinction. Covet not, pursue not premature honour and applause. Extorted praise is gratifying neither to the giver nor the receiver; a free-will offering of approbation is "twice blest; it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." Meditate on the familiar image, which, no doubt, has frequently been suggested to you: honour, like the shadow, pursues the flyer, and flies from the pursuer. Demand less than your due, and men will be disposed to give you the more. My young friends, "be not children in understanding: howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE IX.

*Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.—LUKE iii. 21—23.*

**T**HE declared purpose of our evangelist, in undertaking to write this history, is that his most excellent friend Theophilus, and with him every lover of God and truth, “might know the *certainty* of those things wherein he had been instructed.” This “certainty” is demonstrable from the spirit which christianity breathes, and from the external evidence by which its divine original was confirmed. The religion of Jesus Christ proves that it came down from heaven, from the father of lights, by the character of the great Author and Finisher of our faith, by the example of all righteousness which he set, by the purity and heavenly-mindedness which he displayed and recommended, by the labours of mercy and love which he performed, by the suffering which he patiently underwent, and by “the glory that followed.” To these Providence was pleased to superadd proofs that reach the understanding through the medium of sense ; namely signal, supernatural and frequently repeated testimonies, exhibited in the presence of a cloud of witnesses, who produced a clear, concurring, consistent mass of evidence,



respecting facts which fell under the personal observation of their own eyes and ears and which were never contradicted nor even called in question.

At this distance of time and place, the last mentioned species of evidence, that of external circumstances, must of necessity be transmitted to us through the channel of history, and its validity must rest on the veracity of the historian. The other sort of evidence is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. This counsel approves itself to be of God, to the conviction of every one who seriously examines, at whatever distance of time and place, from its indelible characters, from the universality of the field which it embraces, and from the glorious and godlike end at which it aims : in a word, from its congeniality to the feelings, to the wishes, and to the wants of human nature. Had no prediction taught the world to expect a deliverer ; had no miracle declared Him the great Lord of the universe ; had no voice from Heaven proclaimed Him the beloved Son of God, He must have stood confessed, the predicted Emanuel, God with us, in his compassion to the miserable, in his patience with the forward, in his forbearance toward the evil and unthankful, in his clemency to the guilty. The gospel breathes " peace on earth and good will to men ;" its unbounded liberality diffuses its influence over the whole world of mankind ; its professed aim and end are to confer all possibly attainable happiness on every human being, in the life which now is, and perfect and everlasting felicity in that which is to come. The object which christianity proposes to itself is to reform, to purify, to exalt our fallen nature, by making us partakers of a divine nature ; it is to rear the fabric of present and everlasting blessedness on the solid foundation of wisdom, truth and virtue. It penetrates and pervades every principle of our nature, and enters completely into the detail of human life and conduct : it informs the understanding, melts the heart, overawes the con-



science, and brings the trembling, guilty, helpless, desponding creature unto God. If these are not the characters of a revelation from the God and father of all men. What characters are sufficient to produce belief? If the spirit and tendency of the gospel work not conviction, the descent of an angel from heaven, or the return of one from the regions of the dead would be equally inefficacious.

In this “doctrine according to godliness,” Men and brethren, we behold genuine philosophy, not carelessly slumbering over fancied plans of improvement, not coldly suggesting ideas of reform, not bewildering herself in the peradventures of doubtful disputation, but philosophy alive, awake and in action; philosophy doing good and diffusing happiness; the divine philosophy which brings God down to dwell with men upon earth, and which raises men from earth to heaven. In its great Author we behold not the sullen, supercilious recluse, looking with affected contempt on the weakness and ignorance of mankind, talking and arguing sagely, and effecting nothing, but the beneficent friend of man, mixing with society, looking with complacency on harmless enjoyment, stretching forth the hand to relieve distress, with patience and condescension instructing the ignorant, outrunning the expectations and even the desires of the humble, and overcoming evil with good. At every period, and in every condition of life, we behold Him a perfect pattern of every possible excellence.

We have already contemplated the blessed Jesus in his original glory, before the world was, and in all the wonders of his humiliation to the level of humanity: we have beheld Him in all the affecting interest of infancy and childhood, born in a stable, laid in a manger, aimed at by the dagger of a ruffian, driven into exile, meekly retiring into obscurity, silently increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. From the age of twelve to thirty years, that is for more



than half the period which He tabernacled among men, Providence has seen meet to withhold all traces of his history. Within the short space of about three years is comprized the detail of all the things which Jesus did, and taught, and suffered as the Saviour of mankind. To this eventful era we are now brought forward, and we enter on the contemplation of it with mixed emotions of wonder, reverence and joy.

Stand by, ye princes and potentates of the earth; the King of kings is about to make his public entry. What is the consecration of a prelate, the coronation of an emperor, the voice of a trumpet, the anointing with oil, compared to the majesty, solemnity and importance of the scene displayed on the banks of the Jordan! Bend your heads and cover your faces, "ye angels that excel in strength," He whom ye are all commanded to worship is here. Behold he cometh from Nazareth of Galilee, to the baptism of John; the greater to be baptized by the less. Eighteen years hast thou now passed, Jesus of Nazareth! unseen, unknown, unregarded; under the humble appellation of the carpenter's son, partaking perhaps of the labours of his occupation, faring simply, submitting to authority, unmortified by subjection to poverty, neglect and reproach; and thus hast thou become a gentle and silent, but a severe reprovcr of the restlessness of ambition, of the thirst of distinction, of the impetuosity of appetite, of impatience of restraint. The Saviour of the world, my friends, was pleased to pass through the successive stages of human life, that he might sanctify and instruct every age of man. He became an infant of days, that He might sanctify infancy, and stamp importance and respect upon it; he shewed himself in the temple at the age of twelve, that he might sanctify, and instruct that more advanced period of life in the duty of frequenting the house of God, and of resorting to age, office and experience for the lessons of wisdom. He advanced to maturity to sanc-



tify, and instruct grown men to practise self-denial, self-government, to be content with their lot, to repress inordinate desire, to aim at eminence by learning to become useful. "He that believeth shall not make haste." He remained thus long in the shade, that He might teach his disciples to bear obscurity and retirement, and to cease from premature aspiring. He emerges at length into the light, the season of open and beneficial exertion being come, that he might correct a spirit of indolence, irresolution and affected humility; and to tell every man, that he is sent into the world to act an important part, that he is entrusted with talents for the employment of which he is accountable, that God and his fellow creatures have claims upon him, which he must satisfy at his peril.

The approach of Jesus to Jordan is perceived and announced by the Baptist. The spirit which enabled Simeon to discern the Saviour in the person of a little child, when presented in the temple, now discloses to the eye of the prophet, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, the same divine person on the eve of entering upon his public ministry. He suspends for a moment the employment of teaching and baptizing the multitude, in which he was engaged, to point out to them "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the World." "As the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

John, at first, modestly declines the exercise of his office in a case so very extraordinary. Hitherto he had taught only the ignorant and vicious, and baptized only the impure, in the view of preparing them to receive the blessings of the approaching kingdom of heaven; self-righteous Pharisees, unbelieving profligate



Sadducees, rapacious publicans, seditious, violent and discontented soldiers, such were the men who came to his baptism. But here the application is made by Him "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." This, prophet as he was, confounds all the Baptist's ideas of propriety, and he exclaims: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" The reply of Christ unfolds his spirit, and conveys to us many a useful lesson: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Perfect purity can suffer no contamination from intercourse with the unclean; the impure pollute each other, and the contagion spreads. Conformity in things innocent and lawful is a duty imposed by decency, kindness and regard to peace; dissent merely for the sake of dissent is a mixture of pride and bigotry. That may be admitted under peculiar circumstances, which is not to be drawn into a precedent, nor established as a general rule. A public character is concerned to study his own dignity, and the propriety and consistency of his conduct. The question is not what he *may* do, but what it *becomes* him to do. "Things lovely and of good report" must be thought of together with things that are "true, honest, just and pure." It *became* Him to give public testimony to the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, because it led directly to his own mission, and to the kingdom which He was to establish in the world. It *became* him to put respect on every institution, ceremonial as well as moral, that had the sanction of divine authority, of general use, or of obvious utility. The ceremonial law required "divers washings" and the immersion of the body in water was by no means a novel practice introduced by John, but transmitted through the succeeding ages of the legal dispensation, and compliance with it our Lord considers as part of "the fulfilling of *all* righteousness," and therefore as incumbent on



himself, being the great pattern of propriety. We find him, on another occasion, submitting to an arbitrary imposition, that he might not seem to give offence, in the matter of the tribute money, and performing a miracle rather than shew disrespect to government. "Lest we should offend them," says he to Peter, "go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." Thus he not only "fulfilled" to an iota, "all righteousness," prescribed by the law, but submitted himself to the "ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake."

But there was a farther view in this solemn transaction. The Messiah must be publicly set apart to the execution of his high prophetic office, and He prefers the baptism of John as the mode of performing that august ceremony. He passes through the water into the reign of grace; the kingdom of heaven was now come, and such was his humble entry into it. But this voluntary descent is to be immediately followed by a rise into glory which eclipses all the glory of this world. Samuel anointed Saul with a vial, and afterwards David with a horn of material oil; the Prince "upon the throne of David, of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end," is anointed with the Holy Spirit. The numerous and sounding titles of earthly potentates are, at their inauguration, proclaimed by sound of trumpet; the simple title of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is proclaimed by a voice from heaven. The eyes and ears of the spectators at once bear witness to the declaration of the Son of God. "It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am



well pleased." Painters have presumed to represent this descent of the Holy Ghost under the form of a material dove. The descending, hovering motion, nor the bodily shape of that bird, is surely all that the expression in the evangelists conveys to the mind. As well might an attempt to paint the dazzling lustre of flaming fire, or the sound of the voice that spake, or the motion of the splendid appearance which then filled the sky, as pretend to give precise and permanent form to an apparition of deity, which, having fulfilled its purpose, passed away.

Thus, christians, was consecrated to the noblest work ever undertaken, the great "Prophet that should come into the world."—"The prince of the kings of the earth."—"The apostle and high-priest of our profession," God "also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." And thus was fulfilled the Scripture which saith: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with a rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." And thus is the church of Christ founded upon a rock, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

It is unworthy of remark, that this testimony to the Son of God, from "the excellent glory," was given while he was *praying*? "As He prayed" also, on the



mount of transfiguration, a similar testimony was exhibited, "There came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him." Again, while Jesus *prayed* "Father, glorify thy name;" the testimony from on high was repeated. "Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again," Such is the promptitude of intercommunication between earth and heaven. So rapidly ascend the breathings of a devout spirit to the throne of God; so swiftly descend the tokens of "goodwill to men." "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And if the earnest prayer of an Elias had power to bind up the clouds of heaven for years together, and to smite a guilty land with thirst and famine; how much more powerful must be the prayer of the great intercessor, that "in the wilderness waters may break out, and streams in the desert;" that "the parched ground may become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water!" Therefore also "men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Here are the "Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." "Who can by searching find out God: Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who is able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?"

We have made no remark on the mode of baptism which John employed, because it might lead to controversy, which is unprofitable, to the neglect of practical "goodness," which "is profitable unto all things." "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." Let the spirit of the ordinance be chiefly attended to: wise and good men may very inno-



cently differ about the form. "It is the spirit that quickeneth," the outward form is of secondary importance.

Parents, have ye devoted your infant offspring to God, by the sprinkling with water? Remember the solemn engagements which you then voluntarily undertook to bring them up in the fear, "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Meditate frequently and seriously on the responsibility under which you are laid, to God, to your children, to the world. Your fellow worshippers will witness against you, if you trifle with, if you neglect, if you corrupt your sacred charge. These young ones look up to you for protection, for instruction, for an example; they call upon you to fulfil your promise in their behalf. They ask bread of you; Will you give them a stone? They ask a fish; Will you give them a serpent? They look to you for the portion of goods that falleth to their share; not only "the meat which perisheth, but that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." If you are unfaithful they are undone. On the other hand, "great is your reward" on earth, and still greater "your reward in heaven," if you are honoured to become their spiritual parents, as you are parents after the flesh; if, after having introduced them into this world of nature, you are made the happy instruments of introducing them into the kingdom of God; if you and they together are at length added "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and the "blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Young man, thou wert in early infancy, by the piety of affectionate parents, baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The birth of nature bestowed on thee the name of thy Father after the flesh; when thou wert sprinkled with water, another name was prefixed to it, which continues to be



thy distinctive appellation. Both were indeed imposed without thy consciousness or consent, but in both thou hast cheerfully acquiesced, perhaps they are a source of pride to thee. Even the acquisition of an estate will hardly induce a man of spirit to forego his parental designation, but the christian name is indeliable. Every time thou writest it then, every time thou hearest it addressed to thee, thou art admonished of thy dedication to God. Baptismal engagements rise into view. "I am not my own, for I am bought with a price. What, deny my name! What, sell it for a painted bauble! No, I glory in it; I will not permit it to be dishonoured. What my parents did in my behalf when I was a little child, I now openly avow. They have done their part, through the help of God I will do mine. The name of Christ shall not be blasphemed through my unworthiness. My brothers bear with me the common name of our ancestors, but I will render my own distinguished among many brethren. I will never blush at being called a christian."

My friend, thou hast passed through the water at the age of puberty. Baptism was thy own act and deed. Thou hast entered into the kingdom of God, consciously, deliberately. The vows of God are upon thee. That young person, made a christian by the act of parents, when come to years may disallow that act, may renounce the name but thou hast subscribed with thy hand unto the Lord.

Thou hast put the yoke of Christ upon thy own neck and hast assumed his burthen. Thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and must not look, must not go back. Thou standest pledged to God and to the world to support the honour of the christian name, "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." You feel and acknowledge the obligation; no temptation, no compulsion can induce thee to retract it. Next sacramental solemnity the vow shall be renewed, repeated. The language of thy heart is: "I am not ashamed of



the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth:" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

If the spirit and power of the institution, we repeat it, are thus understood and felt, let a man pass through water into the pale of the church of Christ, or procure that privilege for his child, by the rite of aspersion as conscience may prescribe, and let us "be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

The evangelists, at this interval, presents us with the genealogical table of Christ's descent from Adam downward. It brings us all to the common level of brethren. Through endless and intricate ramifications every man finds himself derived from one and the same root, "the son of Adam, the son God." And the christian is "born again," he is "a new creature," being "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The law of nature binds us to each other as men, the law of the gospel doubles and strengthens the cord of love. This is Christ's "new commandment," the badge of discipleship, "the fulfilling of the law," "the bond of perfectness." "A new commandment," says our blessed Lord, "I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Has God vouchsafed to give such testimony to the Son of his love? Receive it, rest upon it, improve it as a rule of life, as a source of consolation. Ye "have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we have made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" for though you were not "eye-witnesses of his majesty," you have "a more sure word of pro-



phesy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

Ye call Christ " Master and Lord : " and ye say well, for so He is. " It became him to fulfil all righteousness ; " He put respect on the ordinances, on the house, on the word of God : " leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Let the name, the day, the temple, the word of the Lord be hallowed in your eyes. " Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

" The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him : " when He was leaving the world, and going unto the Father, he promised his disciples to " give them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever ; even the Spirit of truth." That Comforter was to teach them all things and bring all things to their remembrance. " He shewed himself " to them " alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs : " He repeated his promise ; " He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." It was accordingly fulfilled : " When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them : and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Thus were they comforted for their master's departure ; thus they received " an unction from the



Holy One," whereby they were set apart unto, and fitted for their great work ; thus were they strengthened to begin and pursue a career which will be felt till time expire. The same Spirit is promised, and is given to us to "help our infirmities," to "guide us into all truth," to take what is Christ's and shew it unto us, to "comfort us in all our tribulation," to shew us things to come. We look not for a miraculous effusion, to enable us to speak with tongues, to prophecy, to work miracles ; but we have good ground to ask and to hope that God will give us "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." "O send out thy light and thy truth ; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles ; then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."

Our blessed Lord entered on his public ministry at the age of thirty, and it was accomplished within the space of little more than three years. Think how much was done in that short space. Were the things which Jesus did, as they stand on this record, and the "many other things" not recorded therein, to be written every one," such would be their number and their lustre, that they would to the world appear to be absolutely incredible, and therefore the world would not be disposed to receive them. Here we have an illustrious pattern of the employment, of the improvement of time. "I must work," says he, "the works of Him that sent me, while it is day ;" the duty of the season in its season. How ought we to blush at our laborious idleness, at our pompous nothings ! What have we to shew for our thirty, forty, fifty, threescore years ? Hardly enough to furnish a decent inscription for a tombstone. Were the history of the most industrious and useful life to be fairly delineated, the world would have cause to wonder at the frequent and hideous chasms, the wild confusion, the indecent rapidity, the causeless delay which the detail would present. What a picture then must the life of the professedly idle and dissipated, of the pro-



fligate and vicious exhibit ! All enters into the book of God's remembrance, and must all come into judgment. What precious time, what invaluable opportunities of doing and of receiving good, have been shamefully neglected, have been vilely cast away !

What moment granted man without account ?

What years are squander'd, Wisdom's debt unpaid ?

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Much is irretrievably lost. Who knows how little may remain ? “ Now it is high time to awake out of sleep : the night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day,” and “ put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” “ Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE X.

*Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. And the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God cast thyself down : for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, it is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, satan : for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—MATT. iv. 1. 11.*

**W**ONDERFUL is the influence which external objects possess over the mind of man : wonderful it is to reflect how body and spirit act upon each other.



On a simple determination of the will, every limb is in motion, every nerve is exerted; and the man is burning under the line, or freezing at the pole. Let the blood be transmitted with a little more than usual rapidity, or move a little more sluggishly, and all the mental faculties are deranged, a new world arises, every former idea is blotted out. The glance of that eye, at one time chills me with terror, and at another it melts me into love. This note rouses me to the battle, and that soothes me into melancholy. Internal serenity and depression are produced by a clearer or grosser state of the air. And if we are thus liable to be affected by objects merely material, what must be the influence of mind upon mind! How powerful must be the sympathy, how prompt the communication of kindred spirits, intuitively perceiving and interchanging mutual sentiments of kindness, gratitude or esteem? Who can conceive or explain the influence which beings wholly spiritual, may exercise over the human species, creatures composed of matter and spirit, whose senses, whose imagination, whose memory, whose understanding, all are so easily impressible?

Of all the faculties which spiritual beings possess, that of rendering themselves the objects of sense, most of all exceeds our comprehension. They present a form, they utter, and receive, and return articulate sounds, and anon they are “vanished into air, thin air.” The appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary, and of the multitude of the heavenly host to the shepherds, is a striking demonstration of it. We have before us another instance of this astonishing faculty, in a spirit of a very different character, and for a very different purpose—Satan, the destroyer, “foe to God and man,” tempting Christ in the wilderness.

The two evangelists who have given us the history of this temptation in detail, differ only in respect of the order of the facts related, that which is placed second in St. Matthew's Gospel, is the third in Luke's, and



that which is the second in Luke is the third in Matthew. We have chosen to follow the latter, because, as he was shortly after called to the office of apostleship, he probably received the history from Christ's own mouth; and because the words which He addresses to the wicked one, in the close of the third temptation, according to Matthew's statement of it, "Get thee behind me, Satan," seem to have concluded the scene. The slight difference, however, serves only to confirm the authenticity of both historians, as it is a proof that the one did not copy from the other. We now proceed to the temptation itself.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Attend to the season which he laid hold of. It was at the moment that he saw Jesus ready to faint with hunger. Attend to the place; it was in the wilderness, which produced nothing fit for food. Attend to the suggestion; it presents nothing apparently offensive. He only wishes a little seasonable relief to one under the pressure of the greatest distress, and that relief procured by means at once simple and innocent. The law had relaxed somewhat of its severity in favour of cases like the present, by exempting from the punishment of theft, the person who had committed it only to satisfy his hunger. But here there was not the shadow of a crime; He had but to employ the power which he certainly possessed, and which he lawfully might exercise. It would be a demonstration of his immediate reliance on his heavenly Father; it would remove all doubt respecting the divinity of his mission. Who could refuse to acknowledge Him who was thus declared to be the Son of God? He himself wants only this proof to induce him, like another Herod, to fall down and worship him.

It is clear that the tempter, when he used the expression "the Son of God," did not fully apprehend the import of what he said, that he did not mean by



it, to acknowledge the divinity of the Saviour. Had he known with whom he had to do, Durst he have undertaken to tempt and seduce him? By "the Son of God," therefore, he understands only a prophet of distinguished rank, superior to all others, of pre-eminent virtue and merit, endowed with higher gifts and powers, chosen and commissioned of Providence for the conversion and salvation of the world, and of consequence infinitely dear to God. In this persuasion his object is an attempt to defeat the plan of Providence, to counteract the measures of Heaven, and, as he had succeeded in the seduction of the representative head of the human race, he entertained the infernal hope of prevailing also over its Restorer and Redeemer. He would dive, therefore, to the bottom of the character of Him, for whose appearance in the world such mighty preparation had been made, and whom a series of circumstances the most extraordinary had pointed out as the peculiar care of heaven. The operation of a miracle will one way or another serve to clear this up. The conversion of stones into bread appearing to him an impossibility, if Christ refuses to perform it, an imputation lies against his power; if he undertake without effecting it, his divine mission is rendered questionable. Can he be God's beloved Son, if he withheld the concurrence of omnipotence in a situation where it is of such high importance to determine what he in truth is? And again, on the other hand, if Jesus pay any attention whatever to the suggestions of Satan, he cannot be the Son of God, for that were to betray ignorance of the person who accosts him, and of the design which he entertained.

Mark still farther "the depths of Satan." He too, unhappily, knows what is in man: and he well knew what a stimulus it is to a mind ever so slightly tainted with pride or vain-glory, when placed, especially in eminence of station, to have the power and authority of that station called in question. The temptation



has, in this view, the air of a challenge to Christ, to support his high pretensions by corresponding actions, and thus he would draw Him into a rash imprudent, vain-glorious display of his power, without a reason and without an end. Miracles are intended, and performed for the conversion of the incredulous, at least for their conviction, and to render them inexcusable. Unless this be in view, power ceases to be under the direction of wisdom. Accordingly we find that whenever haughty, determined unbelievers expected or demanded a sign, it was constantly denied them. What, has the Father entrusted him with his authority, to satisfy a malignant curiosity: and shall that power be lavished away, in humouring the obstinate and incorrigible, which is designed for the instruction and confirmation of such as love and seek the truth? How, Satan call on Christ to work a miracle? and for what end? that he might believe in him? Was the object of his mission to restore "angels who had left their first estate." Had Christ, then, at the requisition of Satan, performed a miracle, he could have nothing in view but an ostentatious exhibition of the gifts committed to him, which was all that the tempter wanted.

This leads to a general observation on the wisdom and moderation which ever governed our Lord's conduct, in this respect. As he never employed his power for the purposes of his own glory, because he sought only that of his heavenly Father, so he never exercised it to promote his own advantage; Charity, not self-love, dictated all his words, all his actions. He withdraws, he retires, when he meant to provide for his own safety; and He remains upon the cross when infidelity defied him to come down. An amiable view of the Son of God! In Him all power appears enthroned, with wisdom standing on the right hand and charity on the left; and it is acting continually in conformity to their advice. How then does he escape the snare laid for him by the devil with such dexterity and



artifice ? By an answer artlessly simple, but at the same time exactly pointed, and directly to the purpose. The Israelites, when pressed by famine, bread failing them in the wilderness, were sustained for forty years by manna falling day by day from heaven ; God substituting in place of bread, the common aliment of man, a celestial food, denominated in Scripture “Angel’s bread,” probably because it was prepared and dispensed by the ministration of angels. This gives occasion to Moses to observe, in recapitulating the conduct of Providence toward that people, “the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

Jesus was now in a situation exactly similar to that of the Israelites, in the barren wilderness, conducted thither by the Spirit of God, following the destination of divine Providence : hunger presses, and the demon urges him to find a supply by converting stones into bread. “There is no occasion to have recourse to this, or to any other extraordinary, uncommanded means,” is the Saviour’s reply, “the unlimited power of my father in heaven is not subjected to the necessity of supporting those who are following the leadings of his Spirit and Providence, by bread alone ; it has an infinity of other methods to supply their wants, to provide for their subsistence. Knowest thou not what he did to the fathers in the desert, as I now am, and what the Scripture saith upon the subject. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” that is through any other medium, “and by any other substance which he shall



please to appoint, and to which he shall affix his blessing." It is thus that Jesus instructs his disciples to wield "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" thus he confounds the tempter, and, without calling himself the Son of God, or proving that he was so by working a miracle, he satisfies himself with making the adversary feel it by the wisdom of his answer, by his confidence in God, and by a patient and profound submission to his will.

How mortifying is the contrast between the perseverance of wickedness in the worst of causes, and the faintness and langour of human virtue in pursuing the best! We are easily discouraged, we are soon weary of well-doing, but the enemy of our salvation is indefatigable, he goeth about continually, he returns still to the charge. He has failed in his first attempt, but he is determined to make another. He goes on a principle but too strongly verified by melancholy experience, that every man, and in Christ he sees nothing yet but a man, that every man has his weak side, some sin that doeth more easily beset him, some leading propensity that rules him at pleasure, and which makes interest, and reason, and conscience, and every thing bend to it. Let the tempter but find this out, and the whole man is his own. He finds Jesus invulnerable on the side of sense and vain-glory he has escaped the snare by the wise and seasonable application of Scripture; but may not a net be woven to entangle him, whose cords shall be drawn from Scripture itself? Here, in my apprehension, lies the force of the second temptation. It is of a piece with the temptation which prevailed over "the man of God" who exclaimed against the altar which Jeroboam had erected, "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the *word* of the Lord," and the tempter flattered himself it would be as readily believed, and therein the deceiver deceived himself.

"Then the devil taketh him," says the evangelist,



“ up into the holy city, that is, Jerusalem, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,” probably the summit of one of the porticos, which terminated in a platform, and were surrounded by a battlement, for the pinnacle of the temple properly so called, was inaccessible, being finished in form of a dome, stuck full of sharp points gilded over to prevent the birds from perching upon it. Josephus represents these porticos, especially that on the south, as of a height so prodigious, from the depth of the valley below, that no head could look downward without becoming giddy. It was to this awful eminence that Satan was permitted to transport from the wilderness the Son of God, and there to propose to him to make experiment of the power, truth and faithfulness of God, saying, “ If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down ; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” The proposal was wild and extravagant in the extreme ; but not less artful than extravagant. The import of it is plainly this, if Jesus Christ be the Son of God, must he not repose confidence in the promises which He has made, and rest assured of his constant care and protection ? If he does not, it must be from a secret distrust of his power and goodness, from a disbelief of Scripture promises, which were in effect to renounce his character as the Son of God. The design of the tempter is apparent : he means to destroy, if he can, the object of his fear and envy. Persuaded that a fall from such a height must prove fatal, and feeling his power limited to art and insinuation, he tries to inspire a presumptuous confidence in heaven, and thus to bring to an open test what he really was, the beloved of God, concerning whom he had given his angels charge, and thereby terminate his own hopes, or ruin a rash and fallible man, like every other whom he had so successfully tried, and thus complete his triumph over frail humanity.



How plausible ! No miracle is so likely to make an impression in his favour on the multitude below ; and what security is equal to the promise of that God who cannot lie ? Who can sufficiently admire the calmness and wisdom with which the insinuation is repelled ? the promise is admitted, the security which it bestows is acknowledged, and the authority of Scripture is established. But Scripture is not inconsistent with itself, otherwise it were not the word of God : spiritual things must therefore be compared with spiritual, and it is written, “ Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” A man is said to *tempt* God, when he calls for extraordinary and unnecessary proofs of his providential care, through diffidence, or to satisfy curiosity.

Thus Israel is said to have *tempted* the Lord, when pressed by the want of water in Rephidim ; the supply was granted, but the place was marked by a name which expressed displeasure : “ he called the name of the place *Meribah, strife*, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they *tempted* the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us or not ?” The same offence was again committed in the wilderness of Sin, under the pressure of hunger : “ Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? can he give bread also ? can he provide flesh for his people ?” The miracle of relief was again interposed. “ He commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven—he rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angel’s food. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls as the sand of the sea.” But it is dangerous to put the goodness and power of God to trial, and by impatience and importunity to extort the indulgence of a man’s “ own desire.” God often withholds in love, and grants from just disapprobation. “ They were not estranged from their lusts ; but while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them.”—And for all this “ they sinned still.”



We have another noted instance of a man's *tempting* his Maker, in the case of Gideon, the son of Joash the Abi-ezrite. He had been called from the threshing floor to fight the battles of his country ; " the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites : have not I sent thee ? " Gideon hesitates, urges, excuses himself. " And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." This does not yet overcome his diffidence ; he must have *a sign* to cure his unbelief. " And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again." The sign is granted. The offering is presented upon the rock ; " then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes ; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." Gideon perceives that he has presumed too far, and begins to tremble for his life, but is instantly relieved from that terror ; " And the Lord said unto him, peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." Who would not have deemed this proof satisfactory ? Is not incredulity now completely disarmed ? The champion of Israel must have sign upon sign. " And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so : for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water." Surely the



contention is at length come to an end, and the patience of God will be put to no further trial. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished O earth, at the presumption of man, and at the condescension of God ! “ And Gideon said unto God, let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once : Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece ; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night ; for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.” But though Deity is thus pleased to yield to the unreasonable demands of man, it ill becomes man to encroach and prescribe.

In our Lord’s repulsion of this temptation, mark the happy union which he recommends to his disciples ; “ Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Harmlessness brings no “ railing accusation,” storms not, threatens not ; even the adversary is not borne down by the weight of authority, but craft is confounded by wisdom. Scripture mutilated, perverted, misapplied, is explained by Scripture in its purity and simplicity ; and the tempter is again made to feel his inferiority.

With a perseverance, however, worthy of a better cause, he returns to the charge. He has been able to make no impression on the side of sense, appetite or vanity. But ambition is the passion of great souls ; and the mighty Julius had lately furnished him with an example of the irresistible power of that lust. “ If,” said the mighty conqueror, “ justice is to be violated, the pleasure of domineering must plead the excuse.” This “ prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,” employs his permitted energies, accordingly, to expand a delightful prospect of the pomp and glory of this world, rendered still more alluring by contrast with the real horrors of the waste howling wilderness, from the sum-



mit of one of whose sterile mountains the vision was displayed. Over all this glory Satan claims absolute and unbounded dominion, and the sole right of disposal; a claim, alas, but too well supported by reality; and of the whole he tenders an immediat transfer, on the easy condition of receiving homage for it. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" was the temptation addressed to the first Adam, and it fatally prevailed, and mankind was undone. "All this power will I give, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it: If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." By this temptation was the second Adam assailed; but it was resisted, repelled, and mankind was restored. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." In Christ's rejection of the former temptation we had occasion to remark the lovely mixture of wisdom and innocence; here we have an equal interesting union of wisdom and zeal: of wisdom, in wielding "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God;" of zeal, in repressing with holy indignation the insolent assumption of the empire of the world, and the no less insolent demand of the homage and worship which are due to deity alone. There is a point beyond which patience ceases to be a virtue, and degenerates into weakness. It is particularly so, when the name, the day, the house, the word, the worship of the great Jehovah are impiously invaded and profaned. The cloven foot is then so apparently uncovered, that nothing is left but an instantaneous and abhorrent dissent, "Get thee hence, Satan." Thus when "the prince of this world" came he found nothing in Christ; no weak part, no unguarded moment, no subjection to the frailties of that nature which he had assumed. The demon hears his own name. Satan, the adversary, pronounced by the lips of truth, and feels himself detected:



Abash'd the devil stood,  
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
Virtue in her shape how lovely ; saw, and pin'd  
His loss.

PARID. LOST.

Thus our Lord's public ministry commenced in unparalleled trials. Thus "the captain of our salvation" began his glorious career, and was at length made "perfect through suffering." But these things were spoken, and done, and suffered for our sakes. "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."—"Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"—"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Draw your supplies, in "the evil day," from the same sacred treasury. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."



Good soldier of Jesus Christ, thy chief danger is from within. There is a traitor in the fortress, carrying on a correspondence with the foe without. Let him be watched night and day ; let him be sacrificed without remorse. The moment he is subdued, the external enemy is stripped of his power. " Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." " Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour : whom resist steadfast in the faith." Thou hast a weak side ; there is a " sin that doth easily beset" thee, and that the tempter knoweth full well, though it may have escaped thy own penetration. Oppose to his cunning the wisdom which is from above. In a state of warfare, remember that no danger is slight, and no foe contemptible. " Be faithful unto death," and thou shalt receive " a crown of life." " To him that overcometh, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne."

Men and brethren, we take encouragement to resist temptation not only from the example but from the intercession of Jesus Christ. Peter was to pass through a fiery trial, and to be singed at least, if not scorched in the flame. It was foreseen and foretold by his compassionate master ; but he would not take warning ; he rushed into the snare and was taken, but was not left in it. He was delivered, raised up again, restored, and his fall was blessed to the consolation and recovery of thousands : " And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And let him that has fallen,



and hath been lifted up again, “learn to walk circumspectly :” let him “not be high-minded, but fear ; let him no longer trust in himself, but “let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God ;” let him be merciful, as he hath obtained mercy.

The grand tempter forced his way into a terrestrial paradise, into the holy city, scaled the pinnacle of the temple, mingled with the sons of God, “has transformed himself into an angel of light, and ever with a design to waste and to destroy.” But into “the paradise of God,” “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,” shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.” Blessed state ! when there shall be no inward corruption, and no fear of assault from without. Fear not, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” “If God be for us, who can be against us ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XI.

*And when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee : and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up : and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias : and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son ? and he said unto them, ye will surely say unto me this proverb, physician, heal thyself : whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, verily, I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were*



*in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.—LUKE iv. 13—32.*

**W**HEN the Son of God came for the Salvation of a lost world, “verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;” he assumed not royal state, but “the form of a servant;” his progress was marked, not by the blood of those who opposed themselves, but by the benefits which he conferred on the evil and unthankful. Subject himself to the sinless infirmities of human nature, he was experimentally taught to sympathize with the weak; “in that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

The wilderness exhibited a wonderful display of divine nature united to humanity, of the humiliation of the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” and of the majesty of the mighty God, who has all creatures at his disposal, and under his control. The man “was an hungred,” and exposed to temptation, and arbitrarily disposed of by an insolent foe: He was humbled to the hearing of blasphemous suggestions,



and the bearing of cruel and unmerited insults. The divinity miraculously sustained the infirmity of nature, quenched the fiery darts of the devil, put Satan to flight, received the homage and service of angels. In all he presented an object of admiration and love, and in every display of human excellence he exhibited a pattern for imitation.

Jesus had now attained his thirtieth year. The spirit of God and of glory rested on him; and a voice from heaven had declared his generation. In the solemnity and solitude of a forty days retirement from all human converse, the order of his future procedure is settled, according to the plan of the eternal mind. Behold him then, in the power of the Spirit, in the greatness of his strength, in the travail of his soul, returning from the desert into Galilee, to enter on his arduous and important undertaking. The public attention was fixed, and expectation excited by the singular circumstances attending his birth and baptism. The discerning eye of the Baptist saw in him "the great Prophet who should come into the world," and with the finger he pointed him out as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." His sudden disappearance after his baptism, and after the testimony then borne to him from above, must have been an occasion of some wonder, and a subject of much conversation, for on his return, at the end of the forty days, we find his fame already spread abroad, and a general disposition to receive and hear him, manifested. And where does he begin his career, and what character does he assume, and what arms does he employ? At Rome, the seat of empire, in the triumphant state of a conqueror, with his sword dyed in the blood of his enemies? No, in Galilee, the proverbially reproachful residence of almost his whole life, in the humble character of a teacher of religion, and employing only the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. In this we behold him teaching us a generous superiority



to the little invidious distinctions of country and kindred, a noble contempt of the glory of this world, an ardent zeal for the glory of God, a benevolent concern for the happiness of men, and a just discernment of the means best adapted to the attainment of these ends.

What a silent instructor had his childhood and youth been of subjection to parental authority, of contentment with a poor and mean condition, of holiness in all manner of conversation? What an interesting object was presented to the eye in a form so fair, animated by a mind so pure and exalted! With what delight must the ear have hung upon those lips which wisdom inspired, and into which grace was poured! How commanding, how attractive that goodness which was incessantly aiming at communicating good to others! Is it any wonder that when He became the public and active instructor of his countrymen, he should be "glorified of all." It was probably about this period, that "the beginning of his miracles" he performed at Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth his glory," by turning water into wine, at the marriage solemnity of one of his relations or friends. By this he approved himself the affectionate, condescending brother of mankind, and, at the same time, the great Lord of nature, to whom all elements are subject; and whereby he reproves the unbending pride of affected wisdom, the uncomplying preciseness which refuses to partake of the harmless intercourse and enjoyments of human life, and the coldness and indifference with which selfishness endeavours to stifle the voice of blood, of friendship and of natural affection. How greatly must his public ministrations have been enhanced and endeared by the meekness and gentleness of his private deportment! What force must divine truth, delivered in the synagogue, have derived from the utterance of that tongue which in domestic and social communication was governed by "the law of kindness."



In the mere human teacher, the professional appearance must frequently be at variance with the personal ; a heart torn, with a thousand anxieties, must try to conceal its bitterness under a serene forehead, and calmness of speech ; and the unhappy man may be administering to others that consolation to which he himself is a stranger, or, what is infinitely worse, may be called by public duty to declare that truth which is his secret reproach and condemnation. But O how delightful the entertainment, when the hand which dispenses to others can with holy confidence take its own appropriated share ! How dignified is the character which, in the closet, in the parlour, in the market-place, in the synagogue, in the pulpit, presents but one and the same person, the servant of God, the friend of man ; the respectable and amiable member of society, the kind relation, the agreeable neighbour, the gentle master, the patriotic citizen, the faithful pastor ! What a model, in all these respects, is presented to the christian minister, in the person, the character and the conduct of his divine master ! What must have been the ineffable charm of that divine eloquence which captivated every ear, every heart ; which commanded universal admiration and applause ; and which, alas, such is the enmity of the carnal mind, so soon roused the vilest and worst of human passions in the breast of his neighbours and acquaintance, envy, and jealousy, and malice, and hatred ! O how pleasant it is to accompany, in thought, the blessed Jesus from house to house ; from devotional retirement, to useful and necessary employment ; from honourable employment, to social endearment ; from the pure and innocent delights of virtuous friendship, to the solemn and sublime exercises of public worship ; and to observe in all the changing scenes, the same lovely simplicity, the same unassuming dignity, the same unvarying charity and good will !

But the evangelist leads us from general to particu-



lar ideas ; and gives vivacity and effect to our meditations, by bringing them to one point of time, of place and of expression. Behold him then at Nazareth, where he had been brought up, in the synagogue, on the Sabbath day, according to his usual custom, standing up to read, unfolding the prophecy, the prophecy of Isaias, a remarkable prediction, and himself the subject of it ; then closing the book, delivering it again to the minister, sitting down to explain and apply what he had read ; and how pleasant it is to mark the emotion which every word, every action produced in an astonished and delighted audience ! Every one of these circumstances seems to merit a few moments meditation.

*He came to Nazareth.* Having visited other parts of Galilee, and taught in their synagogues, and received the cheerful homage which heartfelt gratitude pays to real worth ; having performed the duties of a benevolent neighbour and a kind relation at Cana, rejoicing with them that rejoiced, and putting respect on the ordinance of God, the idea of home suggests itself, the kind affections become concentrated, the calls of nature are felt and obeyed. At Nazareth his mother dwelt ; he was well aware of her maternal tenderness and solicitude ; his forty days absence about his “ Father’s business” must have filled her with pain inexpressible ; her soul was about to be pierced through with many a sword, whose keen point could not be averted ; but filial affection will not suffer her to feel the stroke before the time ; and what moments of ecstasy to a mother those must have been which passed at Nazareth, in the house and in the synagogue, during this blessed interval ! And what delight must it have been to that son to minister to the consolation of his mother !

He came to Nazareth, *where he had been brought up.* The scenes, in which early life was passed, are painted in lively colours on the imagination. Memory



frequently recalls, and the heart fondly cherishes them. They are blended with the ideas of gaiety, and want of care, and innocence. I think with rapture on the tree from which my childish hand plucked the golden fruit ; on the cooling stream which refreshed the tongue, parched with juvenile exercise ; on the flower-enamelled turf whereon I cast my weary limbs ; on the ascent to the house of God along which my yet unconfirmed footsteps accompanied my venerable grandsire at the hour of prayer ; the note of the summoning bell is even now in mine ears. The feeling is natural ; it is harmless ; perhaps it may be virtuous. And is it a degradation of our subject to say that we see in the history before us, the ingenuous, generous Nazarene, thinking with complacency on the particular spots consecrated by the recollections of early piety, of friendship and of enjoyment ; thinking with affection, such as only the Son of God could feel, on the associates of tender years ; on the relations which the hand of nature, on those which the wisdom of Providence had formed ; striving in the maturity of thirty, to communicate to grown men that wisdom and happiness, which the unsuspecting unenvious generosity of twelve delights to convey to its equal. The Saviour of the world is here held up in the honourable, engaging, and attractive character of a liberal and generous townsman ; rejoicing in the exertion of his ripened talents, his improved powers, his enlarged abilities, for the information, improvement and comfort of the friends of his youth.

Attend to the *place* which he chose for this purpose—the place of public assembly, devoted to the service of God, to the conveyance of useful knowledge, and to the devout association of kindred spirits, *the synagogue*. There is indeed no real difference of place, in respect of sanctity. Wherever God is worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” there is holy ground. But man, swallowed up as he is of sense, must have the devout affections raised by an appeal to the lower facul-



ties of his nature : and the form and situation of the spot where he worships, must be called in to assist the mind, to promote the love of his fellow worshippers, to give energy to kind affections, and to elevate the soul to the Creator, on the wings of love to the creature whom he has formed after his own image. To thee, blessed Jesus ! the city and the wilderness, the mountain and the sea shore, the temple and the upper chamber were one and the same thing : but it pleased thee to be a pattern of “decency and order,” to exemplify submission to the ordinance of God, to walk before thy kindred and acquaintance, in “things which are lovely and of good report.”

The service of the synagogue was not at that time perfectly pure ; many corruptions both in doctrine and practice had been introduced, but still God was worshipped there, and Scripture still flowed pure and uncontaminated ; and he will not seem to pour contempt on what savoured of human imperfection, lest that which was genuine and divine should fall into disrepute. A virtuous state of society, and a pure church are highly desirable ; but in order to enjoy such a happy order of things, a man “must needs go out of the world.” All that wisdom and piety united can achieve, is gradually and temperately to ameliorate the public morals, and to rectify disorders which may have crept into the church. No vigilance nor sagacity can prevent the enemy from sowing tares among the wheat ; but though they may be ever so distinguishable, they are not rudely and prematurely to be rooted up, “lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.” They must “both grow together until the harvest.” The holy Jesus derived no taint from a disorderly synagogue and a profaned temple ; but he restored the order of the synagogue, and the sanctity of the temple. He could contract no impurity by sitting down to meat with publicans and sinners ; and learn no hypocrisy by communication with pharisees ; but by the



wisdom and purity of his conversation, publicans and sinners were reproved, instructed and reformed, and hypocrisy stood detected. There is a mean, dishonourable and criminal “becoming all things to all men,” for the sordid purposes of self interest, or the gratification of a vain-glorious spirit; but there is likewise an honourable, manly and praise-worthy accommodation to the wants and wishes of our fellow-creatures, which disinterestedly aims at their good. This lesson “Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ,” and the most independent in spirit of all mankind, had been taught in the school of his divine master. “For though,” says he, “I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

Time permits not at present to proceed on the consideration of the other particular circumstances attending this sacred lecture of the great teacher; such as the time when it was delivered—the *Sabbath day*; the uniformity and constancy of the practice, *as his custom was*; the attitude and exercise, *he stood up for to read*; the subject, a prediction concerning himself from *the book of the prophet Esaias*; his commentary upon it, *this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears*; and finally, the effect produced on his audience, *the eyes of all them that were in the Synagogue were fastened on him; and all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*. These particulars, therefore, will con-



stitute the subject of our next exercise of this kind. We conclude the present with a few practical reflections.

1. Meditate on the venerability of the sabbath, the day of sacred rest. It is the ordinance of God himself, who is represented in Scripture, not only as the author of the institution, but as setting the example of its devout observance. "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." He made it a season of solemn contemplation: "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." He pronounced a benediction upon it, and set it apart to holy purposes: "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." It is one of the natural measurements of time, though modern infidelity has made an attempt to efface it. It wears a benevolent and merciful aspect toward man and beast. It is intimately and indissolubly connected with religion. The violation of the sabbath was considered, under the Mosaic dispensation, as a flagrant contempt of the divine authority, and subjected the offender to the punishment of death. To the regular and spiritual observance of it, on the other hand, were annexed many and gracious promises. I quote only the following: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day: and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—The substitution of the first, in place of the seventh day of the week, under the evangelical dispensation, binds more closely, not relaxes the obligation; and



the honour which God has been pleased to put upon it, is a sufficient recommendation, independent of the authority of human laws. As, on the contrary, the character of the persons who live in the open and habitual neglect or profanation of it, is the reverse of a recommendation to every man of sense, decency and virtue. But,

2. Take care not to sink the spirit in the letter of the ordinance. It is a day of *rest*; but idleness and rest are very different things. The mental composure and repose of the man, infinitely transcend the listless inaction of the brute. The body of the man indeed rests from the painful toil of the week, and his mind from its perplexing cares. But this is perfectly consistent with vigorous bodily exertion, and with intenseness of mental application. The feet, the hands, the eye, the tongue, may all be actively employed in rendering unto God a "reasonable service." The superiour powers of the soul may be in an ascending motion up to "the Father of lights;" and in a progressive motion toward the "rest which remaineth to the people of God." The lips of the wise and good may be devoted to the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the ear of the willing and obedient may drink in the doctrines of truth and the obligations of duty. This mutual interchange of kind offices, will produce an interchange of kind affections. Good will *among* men will be preserved and promoted. The bands of nature will be strengthened by those of religion. To worship in one temple will become a bond of union among brethren, and will extinguish the coal of animosity; and thus "godliness will be found profitable unto all things," and will exert a happy influence over "the life which now is," while it embraces "the promise of that which is to come."

3. Conformity in things of inferior or of no moment, is a duty which we owe both to ourselves and to others: to ourselves, because it is the mark of a gracious and condescending character; to others, be-



cause every man has a title to deference and respect, in matters where another man's conscience is not concerned. Sourness and incomppliance are no part of the spirit of Christ. Nevertheless, many who bear that name discover a tenaciousness of trifles, a bigotry to self-opinion, inconsistent not only with the christian temper, but with good sense and good manners. This moroseness of disposition levels all distinctions and affixes the same idea of criminality to an enormous offence and adherence to a harmless form of ceremony. With a man of this description, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man : he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood ; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Difference of opinion among men is part of the plan of a wise Providence. It affords exercise to human faculties ; it expands a field for the display of mutual forbearance ; it is a striking manifestation of the variety of the works of God. He who will yield no point, however insignificant, has no reason to expect that his punctilio should be regarded. Were the whole world of this ungainly, untractable, uncomplying nature, society would present a perpetual and universal strife of contradictory feelings, humours and interests. The rule of the gospel is in this case, as in every other, absolute : " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets." Indeed the great Prophet carries the spirit of his religion much farther : " I say unto you, that ye resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee ; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

4. Watch and seize every promising opportunity of



doing good ; and such occur every day that we live. Have we not the poor always with us ? Might not the crumbs which fall from that table be given to feed many starving mouths ? Do we not live in contact with ignorance and vice, with misery and disease ? And is it in our power to grant no relief, not so much as “a cup of cold water ?” It is truly humbling to reflect how means and occasions of being useful to the bodies and to the souls of men, and of promoting our own highest interests, have been carelessly neglected, or deliberately abused. Judgment to come, however, sets the matter in a very serious light : “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.” “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

But this direction too must be accompanied with a caution. “Let not your good be evil spoken of.” “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” There is an officiousness of perhaps well-meaning goodness, which sometimes disdains to weigh the circumstances of times, places and persons ; which will introduce certain topics out of, as well as in season, to the grief of the more prudently serious, the disgust of the lukewarm, and the mirth of the profane. “A word spoken in due season, how good is it !” “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.” Finally.

5. Bring forth “things new and old,” from the inexhaustible stores of Scripture. From this sacred repository our blessed Lord derived arguments to silence and confound the adversary, and a subject of in-



struction for the men of Nazareth. From the same precious treasury, from those “wells of salvation,” the faithful of every age have drawn the waters of consolation, to support and refresh them under every pressure of distress, to counteract the bitterness of death, and to enjoy a foretaste of the “pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” “Jesus answered and said,” to the woman of Samaria, at Jacob’s well, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life ;” and “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Therefore, “search the Scriptures ;” as Christ hath commanded, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.” Ye “have Moses and the prophets” ye have Christ and his apostles ; hear them. If men reject their testimony, “neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XII.

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at his gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.—LUKE iv. 16—22.*

WE read, in the history of the patriarchal ages, of an illustrious personage who exercised at once the functions of a priest and of a sovereign; Melchizedec, “King of Salem, and priest of the Most High God.” He, whom this venerable person thus early represented to the world, united to these two characters, a third, less splendid indeed, but not less important, that of a teacher and instructor of mankind; and thus He became all that a guilty, enslaved, ignorant world stood in need of. In the blessed Jesus,



O wretched man, thou beholdest the great High Priest of thy profession, who hath, by one offering, one victim, one blood, procured the remission of all thy offences; the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has broken assunder the bands of thy yoke, and asserted thee into the “glorious liberty of the sons of God;” and the great, unerring teacher sent from God, who spake as never man spake, whose lessons make men wise unto salvation.

As the sovereign and Lord of nature we have seen him exercising dominion over the powers of the world visible and invisible, putting Satan to flight by a word, receiving the homage and ministrations of angels. As a High Priest, “after the order of Melchizedec,” we shall in the progress of this history behold him offering himself, once for all, “a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God.” We are this evening to sit at his feet, and to listen to him in his humbler and more familiar character of the meek, patient, and condescending instructor of the weak, the ignorant, and the prejudiced. And, O may the gracious words which proceed from his mouth not only excite our wonder, but penetrate and melt our hearts, kindle our repentings together, and put all that remains of our existence under the dominion of love.

His first labours of affection were bestowed upon his kindred and acquaintance, they were consecrated to the improvement of the companions and friends of early life. He had hitherto taught them by example, he now teaches them out of the written word. Had he been covetous of fame or of honour, he would surely have chosen another theatre on which to display his superior powers, for he well knew that no prophet is accepted in his own country. He well knew that eminent excellency excites envy, that envy produces malignity, and that malice prompts to evil speaking. But regard to his own interest and ease is lost in compas-



sion to others, and the love of reputation with men reverently bends to zeal for the glory of God. Every circumstance of the scene before us is interesting and instructive.

We have in the preceding lecture adverted to those of place, it was "in Galilee at Nazareth where He had been brought up," and "in the synagogue." Attend now to the *season*, it was *on the Sabbath day*. As to the pure, all places, so all times are pure, yet to man, weak and imperfect as he is, distinction of both time and place is important and necessary. Shew me a man who is habitually and uniformly that in the world, which decency obliges him to appear to be in the house of God, and I shall not presume to condemn him, though he frequent not the temple; although such a one is of all others the least likely to desert it. Shew me the man whose every day is a day of order, of piety, of mercy, and of good works, and such a one shall, for me, spend the seventh day in what manner he will; though such a one is of all others the most likely to put respect on the ordinance of God. Who of all those, who are born of a woman, stood least in need of the influence and assistance of sacred edifices and seasons? He whose conversation was continually in heaven, whose "meat and drink it was to do the will of his heavenly father," who never lost sight, for a moment, of the great end of his mission. And who was so regular in his attendance on the exercises of religious worship; who was so exact in the observance of every institution that was stamped with marks of divine authority?

The sabbath is an ordinance of mercy, designed by Him who "preserveth man and beast," to be an interruption of painful toil, a restorer of exhausted nature, a season of repose; but in perfect consistency with this, it is a season of mental exertion of beneficence; of devout contemplation, of virtuous, social intercourse. But the observance of the sabbath had,



when our Saviour came into the world; degenerated into a narrow and grovelling superstition, which separated from it every idea of mercy and good-will to men, and the spirit was sunk in the letter. It therefore became this great teacher, to restore the institution to its primitive design and use, and to guard mankind equally against the extremes of superstition, on the one hand, and of profanity on the other: and this he does with a wisdom, a delicacy, and a dignity peculiar to himself. Who can think slightly of what he treated with respect? Who dares to violate what he observed as “the holy of the Lord and honourable?” And who again can think he is doing honour to God by expressing indifference, unkindness, and want of sympathy to men? He who attended the synagogue, who read and expounded the Scriptures on the sabbath; on the sabbath also restored the withered hand, defended his disciples from the charge of profanation, displayed the character of the sovereign Lord of the sabbath, as preferring mercy to sacrifice, and as having instituted “the sabbath for man, and not man for the sabbath.”

Observe farther, the evangelist takes care to inform us that Christ’s attendance on the services of the synagogue and the sabbath was not merely accidental or occasional, but habitual and stated: *as his custom was*. What we do according to no fixed rule, we do feebly and confusedly. What we do seldom, we do with reluctance and dislike; and from dislike the natural transition is to total omission. On the contrary, what is subjected to rule is done accurately and efficiently; what we do habitually, we do with ease and delight; for custom, says the proverb, and with much truth, is a second nature. The Saviour of the world, accordingly, vouched to become an example here also, as of every thing else that is wise and good; He was a pattern of regular, orderly conduct; from his childhood, and upward. He was a silent instructor of the



successive stages of rising existence, in docility, in contentment, in submission, in regularity.

Let no one tell me that it is useless to habituate children betimes to the forms of devotion; to the observance of institutions whose meaning and intention they do not fully comprehend: to restraints which to them appear harsh and unreasonable. It is a great thing, indeed it is every thing, to be under the government of innocent or praise-worthy customs: to be inured to the laws of order; to be prepared for thinking for themselves, and for having their sentiments heard and attended to, by learning to pay respect to the understanding, to the opinions, and to the experience of others. Think with what holy indignation, He, whose name we bear, would have listened to a proposal to violate his custom, and make the hour of the devotions of the synagogue, the hour of walking into corn fields!

The historian is here singularly minute, and gives wonderful vivacity, to his representation, by going into a detail of particulars. Among these, we must advert to his posture and attitude, when employed in reading to the people the word of God. *He stood up for to read.* Nature seems to point this out as an attitude of reverence and respect. Since the days of Abraham, who stood up and bowed himself before the people of the land wherein he dwelt, the wise, the benevolent and the courteous have employed it as an expression of regard to superiour sanctity, power, majesty or multitude. Posture is, in itself, still more indifferent than time or place; but nothing is indifferent in the eyes of true wisdom by which the interests of either human virtue or felicity can be affected. Truth is the same whether delivered in an erect or a recumbent posture. But in matters of this sort, What says common practice? Will my compliance conciliate affection, procure attention, give force to what is said? Then I will cheerfully conform. Will



my singularity give offence, will it awaken prejudice, will it injure the cause I mean to promote? Then I will not affect singularity; I will not be uncomplying nor unkind; and I will not dissent only where conscience is concerned, and where compliance would be criminal.

How melancholy is it to reflect, on the talents which have been perverted, on the time which has been wasted, but that is comparatively nothing, on the angry spirits which have been excited, on the oceans of blood which have been spilt, in determining whether standing, sitting or kneeling; whether this or the other unessential circumstance were most adapted to the nature of things, or most conformable to the will, or conducive to the glory, of the Creator. In this too, therefore, I consider the example of Christ as intelligible, decided and instructive.

He “stood up *to read*.” Happily for the world, its information and instruction in matters of everlasting moment were not entrusted to the uncertainty, the changeableness and the corruptibility of oral tradition. He who bestowed on man the gift of speech, for the mutual communication of thought, gave likewise the pattern of permanent speech, by means of writing; by which thought is transmitted from region to region, from generation to generation, unsophisticated, unimpaired. Hence the events which Moses recorded, and which Isaiah predicted, the precepts of the law and the promises of the gospel, descended from age to age in equal purity, weight and measure: and the son sees, reads and apprehends the self-same truth which was the light and joy of his progenitors. And what must it have been to hear the sublime and pathetic strains of Isaiah pronounced by the tongue of Him who formed the ear for the perception of melodious sounds, the mouth to utter them, and the heart to receive the impression of sacred and interesting truth! We may judge of it from the mute attention with which he was



heard and from the wonder expressed after he had finished, “at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”

It would appear that it was not only “his custom” to attend the synagogue, but to perform the office of public reader to the assembly. For the proper minister delivers to Him, as to the acknowledged conductor of this part of the service, that portion of the Sacred Code which either order prescribed, or which his selection called for, or to which Providence especially directed; and he received it from Him again to be deposited in its place. And whether indeed did Providence, independent of human design or foresight, by a special interposition unfold the particular passage from ancient prophecy; or did his own choice select it as peculiarly applicable to the occasion? In either case, what portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more emphatically descriptive of his person, character, and divine mission? And what can be so worthy of our most deep and serious attention, whether we consider the infinite and everlasting moment of the subject, the interest which we have in it, or the affecting correspondence of the event with the prediction, of the prophet with his object.

The prophecy holds up to view a person of the most distinguished eminence, consecrated in the most extraordinary manner, to the execution of the most generous, merciful and benevolent purposes, and in language the most powerful and pathetic. It is the *anointed* of the Lord God, his *Holy One*, who alone could without presumption undertake, and could unfold that “great mystery of godliness,” which angels desire to look into: who was set apart from everlasting to this high destination, who was gradually revealed, and in the fulness of time, sent to be the salvation of God to all the ends of the earth. Who was anointed, not as Aaron to the priesthood, and David to the sovereignty,



by a material oil of exquisite odour and costly price, but by the effusion of the Spirit, the Spirit of power, of wisdom, of holiness, which rested upon him without measure ; and which was bestowed upon him for what purpose ? with Moses to humble the pride, and crush the power of Egypt ? or with Cyrus, “ to subdue nations, to loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates, to make the crooked places straight, to break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron ;” to execute the righteous judgment of the Eternal on rebellion, presumption and disobedience ; to condemn and to destroy ? No, when this mighty *One* cometh, armed with power, anointed with the Spirit, it is to dispense grace, to diffuse happiness, to relieve the miserable.

“ He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the *poor*.” The poor are, with the great of the earth, the objects of neglect, and contempt, and oppression. In the dictionary of the world, rich means respectable, powerful and important : and poverty is equivalent to wretchedness, meanness, despicability. But the dispensation of grace by the gospel inverts this order ; it affixes a different, indeed an opposite meaning to words, it raises into consequence what was lightly esteemed, and it hurls pride down to the ground. It “ puts down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth them of low degree.” Is it poverty of condition ? That is no bar against the admission of the consolations of christianity ; that is no disqualification for enjoying the rights of citizenship of the kingdom of heaven ; that implies no exclusion from the glorious “ privileges of the sons of God ;” that implies neither sin nor shame. Is it poverty of spirit ? It is the creature’s highest glory ; it is the Redeemer’s brightest and most perfect image ; it is the soul’s preparation for the kingdom of heaven. To the one and to the other is the anointed of the Lord sent to preach the gospel ; to the poor in this world, that they may learn



to be sober minded, patient and content ; not envying nor grieving at the good of others, but laying up for themselves “ treasures in heaven ;” looking for “ another country,” for a “ city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God :”—to the poor in spirit, that they may “ grow in grace, ’ that they may contemplate and follow their pattern more closely, learning of him daily to be “ meek and lowly in heart, that they may find rest to their souls.”

“ He hath sent me to *heal the broken hearted.*” Gracious office ! divine physician ? ‘Thou only art equal to the task. “ The heart knoweth its own bitterness ;” The ill admits of no cure ; the officious consolation of the creature only irritates the wound ; time itself brings no relief. But behold, here, not a temporary relief, but a lasting cure ; not the transient spirit and calm of a stupifying opiate, but the solid support of wholesome food, and the refreshing balm of wholesome rest. An insnaring, persecuting world, mourner in Zion, disturbs thy peace, and breaks thy heart ; but He hath said “ be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” “ In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace.” In the bitterness of thy soul thou criest out, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”—Trembling, sinking creature, speak peace to thy soul, “ return to thy rest,” there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus ; it is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ?”

To preach *deliverance* to the *captives*. Bondage, slavery, captivity are happily known to us only by the name, or in idea. We are more than Abraham’s children ; our fathers contended for liberty, Heaven granted it, and we enjoy it. But ah ! our country is but a speck on the globe ; our population is but a handful of men. And alas, even in our own country there is captivity. How many among us “ wax poor and fall into decay,” and that not from profligacy and prodi-



gality alone? The creditor cometh, and there is nothing to give him. The loss of liberty is the consequence: the evil becomes worse and worse. He who entered within the walls of a prison unfortunate only, continues there under a total incapacity of shaking off calamity. What was at first the pressure of debt, imperceptibly changes into an intolerable load of vice, from which a miracle of grace alone can deliver. How many thousands of our fellow subjects are in this unhappy, this almost hopeless condition! But liberty may exist even in a dungeon. If the prisoner carries with him into confinement the "spirit of adoption," he is already delivered from bondage. No bolts, nor bars, nor fetters of iron can restrain the heaven-born mind: he can look up and "cry, Abba, Father!" "He that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's freeman." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Paul in bonds, a prisoner in the cause of Jesus Christ, possesses a nobly free and independent spirit. Galled with "many stripes;" "thrust into the inner prison" at Philippi, with Silas his companion in tribulation, "their feet made fast in the stocks," they enjoy liberty of access to the throne of grace. "At midnight they prayed, and sang praises unto God." Thus "the Lord looseth the prisoners," and thus the Anointed is "sent to preach," and to give deliverance to the captives."

But what, in respect either of multitude or of misery, are imprisoned debtors, or even felons lying under the rod of the law, compared to the voluntarily enslaved? "Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." And what blindness is like wilful blindness, and what servitude so hopeless, so inglorious as that into which a man degrades himself? It is some alleviation of the depression of servile estate, that the master is honourable, and that the service required is neither humiliating nor severe: but O how mortifying the reflection of being in subjection to an unfeeling monster.



to a capricious tyrant, to a contemptible groundling! And such is every slave to irregular appetite, whether it be the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life." Such dream that they are following their own will, but in truth they "are led captive by Satan at his will;" and "the wages of sin is death." To deliver from this most inglorious, this fatal thralldom, then, is the object of Christ's mission. What, Britons, glory, and well you may, in your civil liberties! and willingly assume the yoke of a paltry interest, of a grovelling propensity which you are ashamed to avow! What, make it your boast that the moment the ill-fated African breathes British air he becomes free! and continue deliberately to "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind," which "war against the soul!" Great Deliverer, exert thy power, display thy grace; "open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified."

"He hath sent me—for the *recovering of sight to the blind*." On what numberless, and what delicate hinges does human comfort turn! Who can describe "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to?" Were the kindness of nature or the care of Providence to be suspended but for a day, into what a lazar-house would the world be instantly transformed! The defect of a nail of a little finger is a blemish in organization, but a blemish which nature seldom permits; how much less a deficiency of one of the nobler parts, or a disarrangement of the whole system! "But that the works of God should be made manifest," a "man is blind from his birth;" and another loses "the precious treasure of his eye-sight." Of the two, the latter surely is the greater evil. We cannot regret what we have hardly an idea of, what we never possessed, and to which we become perfectly reconciled before we are conscious of existence. But to recollect the pleasures



of vision after the organ is destroyed; but to be reduced to mourn with the poet in these affecting strains :

With the year  
Seasons return ; but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herbs, or human face divine :  
But cloud instead, and ever during dark  
Surrounds me ! from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off ; and for the book of knowledge fair,  
Presented with a universal blank  
Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out !

PARAD. LOST.

This is “darkness which may be felt.” In representing, accordingly, the deplorable state of the world under the image of *blindness*, a state of ignorance, guilt and wretchedness ; and in representing the correspondent office and work of the Redeemer, that blindness is not described as an original and radical defect of sight, but as the casual deprivation of a blessing once in possession : and he is considered as sent not to confer a benefit unknown, unenjoyed before, but to restore that which was lost, to relumine the extinguished orb. The truth is, men had wilfully shut their eyes, because they could not bear the light. This was the condemnation of the unbelieving Jews, with all their superior advantages : “Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world ; that they which see might be made blind. And some of the pharisees which were with him heard these words and said unto him, Are we blind also, Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.” And this was the condemnation of the self conceited Gentiles, with all their affectation of wisdom : “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools :” “they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” They are in another place thus describ-



ed, and under the same image ; “ The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart :” And this mental darkness is represented as necessarily blended with moral corruption of the grossest kind. Thus are both Jews and Gentiles involved in thick darkness, and both under the dominion of sin ; “ God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” The promises of Messiah are of equal extent ; as “ a salvation prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.”

“ He is sent, *to set at liberty them that are bruised.*” We have here a representation of human misery in every circumstance of aggravation ; poverty, mental depression, captivity, blindness, fetters of iron. There is in this gradation, perhaps, an allusion to the horrid treatment of unhappy prisoners on falling into the hands of their enemies. They were shut up in prison, their eyes were thrust out, they were loaded with chains. Thus was Samson treated, the moment his strength failed, and his cruel adversaries had obtained power over him : “ The Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass ; and he did grind in the prison-house.” And the sight of his wretchedness they called *sport*. In this manner could one king act by another. “ So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah ; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.” Such are the dreadful abuses which a man commits against his brother ! such is the dreadful malignity of the human heart ; such the detestable working of “ the carnal mind,” which “ is enmity against God” and an unrelenting foe to man !

This enumeration of human woes, is equivalent to a



declaration, that whatever may be the nature, and whatever the extent of the malady, the promised Deliverer should come provided with a suitable remedy. And when he did come, he not only exercised this gracious power himself; for “they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them;” but he communicated the same salutary virtue to his disciples also; “He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.” And thus was the Scripture fulfilled. The prophecy contains one important article more:

The anointed is sent *to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*. “The law had a shadow of good things to come.” With its severity was blended a powerful infusion of mercy and mildness, the particulars of which had a direct reference to the times and the spirit of the gospel. Of these the year of jubilee was one of the most distinguished. It was ushered in with the sound of the trumpet, “proclaiming liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.” On the return of this hallowed fiftieth year, debts were remitted; alienated lands reverted to their original proprietor; the Hebrew bond-servant to a Hebrew, “he and his children with him” were to be set free, and restored to their rank in Israel; the poor Hebrew, who had been reduced to the sad necessity of selling himself as a slave to a stranger, was to be redeemed by his next of kin. In a word, at the expiration of every seven times seven years, all the disorders which had crept into the commonwealth, from the period of the preceding jubilee, were to be rectified, and all reinstated on the original basis. It is easy to conceive how such an era would be looked unto and longed for, what a happy tendency it had to ameliorate the condi-



tion of myriads, and to check the progress of oppression. In contemplating it the psalmist exclaims : " Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound ! " It was a figure of that " acceptable year of the Lord " which it was predicted the Messiah should be sent to proclaim, the perpetual jubilee of the gospel, for the remission of sins ; for the restoration of the forfeited inheritance of the saints ; for the manumission of the slave ; for the redemption of the captive ; for releasing and bringing back the exile : in a word, " to destroy the work of the devil," to repair the ravages of sin and death, to introduce universal and everlasting liberty, and peace and joy.

The sequel of this service of the synagogue, and the effect which it produced, will be the subject of the next lecture.

Learn, christian, to compare Scripture with Scripture, and predictions with their corresponding events. Search diligently for him to whom all the prophets give witness, and in whom " all the promises of God are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God." Much is clearly manifested and pointedly applied ; but much still remains to be brought to light. Truth will not obtrude itself on the careless, superficial reader or observer, but discloses its hidden charms to the diligent, the devout and the inquisitive. It is the injunction of Christ himself : " Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me." Search then in this particular view, and ye will have to tell to others what Philip said to Nathaniel ; " We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." " With joy shall ye draw water out of these wells of salvation : " and having tasted how sweet and refreshing it is, you will be disposed to impart it to others, for in this, if in any case, the saying of the wise man is verified : " There is that scattereth and yet increaseth : " and " it is more blessed to give than to receive."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XIII.

*And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, physician, heal thyself: Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months. when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: For his word was with power.—*  
LUKE iv. 20—32.



**I**T is truly affecting to think on what a slippery foundation men attempt to rear the fabric of happiness. They dream of deriving it from their own stores. In the pride of his heart, a man imagines himself to be equal to every thing. What can elude his penetration; what can resist his force; what can fatigue his industry? Nevertheless, the stammering of a child betrays his purpose; the rustling of a leaf melts his resolution; a stone cut out of the mountain, and hurled at him by an invisible hand, crushes in a moment all his powers into the dust. Are they more secure, or more successful who depend on foreign aid; who build their felicity on the ability, the constancy, or the affection of others? Alas, it is an attempt to erect a house upon the sand; the washing of the next tide levels it to the ground. Friendship, in a flush of zeal, promised you all encouragement and support. The hour of need comes, and you have recourse to the heart which fondly cherished you; it has waxed cold, it is alienated, it acknowledges you no longer. Your mountain stood strong in a prince's favour. What shall not "be done to the man whom the king delights to honour! Ah, his breath, is in his nostrils, he died yesterday, he has returned to his dust. Applauding multitudes hang upon your lips, the public finger point you out with approbation: but "you have heard" of the sufferings, as well as of the patience of Job. "When I went out of the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me and hid themselves: and the aged rose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth as for the latter rain; I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army—But," O sad reverse! "they that are younger than I, have me in derision.



And now I am their song, yea I am their by word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face—Upon my right hand rise the youth, they push away my feet: they mar my path, they set forward my calamity.”—And such is every one who trusteth in popular favour; he feedeth on the wind and graspeth the east wind in his arms.

But a more illustrious and more instructive instance, to this purpose, than that of Job, is before us. Now the eyes of the admiring multitude in the synagogue are fastened with wonder and delight on the face of Jesus; anon they are filled with wrath against him: now all bear him witness, and dwell upon “the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth;” next moment they are up in arms, they thrust him out of the city, they hurry him to the brow of the hill, with an intention to cast him down headlong. The cry to-day is, “let us take him and make him a king, never man spake like this man;” to-morrow it is, “away with him, crucify him; not this man but Barabbas.” Let us trace the progress of the scene, and observe what produced the sudden change, and learn to cease from man, and to draw consolation and support from the approbation of God, and from the testimony of a conscience void of offence.

The passage which he had read from the prophet, was deeply interesting and affecting. It held up to view a most illustrious personage, supporting a dignified and important character, and singularly qualified for the exercise of it, employed in rendering the most essential services to mankind; evangelizing the poor, healing the broken hearted, redeeming the captive, enlightening the blind, setting the prisoner free, proclaiming the jubilee year, the era of universal joy. The value and weight of the subject were greatly enhanced by the manner in which he rehearsed it. Into his lips grace was poured: what majesty sat enthroned on his brow! what mild glory beamed from his eyes! what



dignity and grace in his attitude as he rose and sat down, in receiving the book and delivering it again to the minister ! Behold every eye is fixed upon him, every ear is attention, while in these few but emphatical words, he explains and applies the prediction of the prophet, “ This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” “ I am He to whom the prophet gives witness ; I am come into the world on this benevolent design ; I, your bone and your flesh, your brother, your neighbour, your fellow-citizen, your friend.” “ Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

On this admiration gradually gives way to a feeling less gentle. Familiarity lowers the object with which it converses : self-love cannot brook to acknowledge a superiour in an equal ; envy seeks to indemnify itself under the oppresson of eminent worth and excellence, by discovering and fixing upon some humiliating, mortifying circumstance, that reduces the hated greatness nearer to its own level. This explains the change which so quickly appeared in our Saviour’s auditory. Dazzled, at first, by both the matter and the manner of his address, they crown him with applause. But perceiving themselves eclipsed in the lustre of his graces and virtues, sinking as he rose, they strive to tumble him from his excellency, as if by degrading him, they were themselves to mount. His parentage is his only vulnerable part ; that was poor, and mean, and despised, and that, accordingly, envy brings forward with affected surprise. “ Is not this Joseph’s son ?” And when once this baleful, malignant passion has taken possession of the breast, every claim of justice, every plea of worth, every call of gratitude, every emotion of mercy, is disregarded, stifled, trampled under foot.

Christ observes it with pity, not with indignation ; for he came not only to relieve the miserable, but to bear with and overcome the froward, to con-



vince, subdue and melt the obstinate, to cure prejudice, and to instruct indocility. Their uncivil, invidious inquiry excites in him no resentment ; it can do him no hurt ; but grieved at the hardness of their heart, and at the same time, compassionating their weakness, he at once, reproves the one, and makes an apology for the other. The apology he draws from the common, and well known, principles of human nature. No prophet is accepted in his own country. Among strangers, a man is esteemed according to his talents and virtues. His ancestry and kindred are a matter of no moment. It is even a degree of merit to have emerged out of obscurity ; but at home, among kindred and acquaintance, eminent qualities are regarded with a jealous eye. The reputation, ability and wisdom of exalted goodness are considered by the less deserving as a reproach to themselves : What is every day within our reach we every day neglect. What costs us little we lightly esteem. Difficulty, and danger, and distance enhance the value of every object of pursuit. But the very apology implies a censure of human nature, as wicked, unjust and absurd, in undervaluing worth merely because it is allied to us, and neglecting good for no better reason than that it is known.

Our blessed Lord, accordingly, blends mild and gentle reproof with the excuse which he makes for the unkind return that his countrymen and kinsfolk had made to his affectionate endeavours to serve and to instruct them. And this seems to be the force of his reasoning—"You have heard, my dear friends, of my going about doing good, at Capernaum and elsewhere ; and you will naturally and with justice say to me, in the language of the common proverb, Physician, heal thyself : look at home ; in attention to objects more remote, overlook not such as are equally pressing, and still more nearly interesting ; let thy own country, if not in preference, at least in common with strangers,



reap the benefit of these thy extraordinary, supernatural powers. Well, my beloved countrymen, here I am for this very purpose : ready to instruct you in the way of salvation, ready to heal all your plagues, to perform all the offices of mercy and loving kindness which the prophet, in the passage which I now read, predicted concerning me : but I know the meaning of these ungracious looks, of these malignant whispers, of that envious inquiry into my pedigree, and occupation, and connections in life. You are under the power of prejudice, you are too well acquainted with me to reap benefit from my ministrations : my labours will be more acceptable where I am less known."

"It happeneth to me as it did to the prophets of old ; they were neglected, hated, persecuted of their own countrymen ; and you inherit the spirit of your fathers, whom no calamity could subdue, no arguments convince, no goodness charm. I appeal to the history of our own nation. The times of Elijah's prophecy were marked with many signal interpositions of Divine Providence, particularly with a grievous famine, occasioned by a drought of uncommon duration, three years and six months. It was universally felt, particularly by the poorer and more unprotected part of the community, the widow, and the fatherless ; and the extraordinary powers of the prophet were equally well known and acknowledged. But what is the fact ? Was the prophet sought unto ? Did the general distress drive the sufferers to seek relief in the piety and miraculous powers of the man of God ? No, he was the *Tishbite*, the son of somebody whom they knew, he was at home, among his own and therefore his person was despised, his office slighted, and even the widow and the fatherless, unsubdued by the strong hand of necessity, perished from want, because they scorned the humane and compassionate interposition of a neighbour and kinsman. But O how acceptable was his visit to a stranger, a pagan, a wo-



man of Sidon ? She felt with others the pressure of the common calamity ; the law of self-preservation, and compassion for the son of her womb, were strong in her, as in any widow or mother in Israel ; but more faithful and believing than they, she cheerfully made the sacrifice of her last earthly provision ; at the word of the prophet, she gave up her own and her son's substance ; she reposed confidence in heaven, she acknowledged the ensigns of Deity, she cast herself upon a miracle, and her hope made her not ashamed."

"Take another example, my friends, from your own history, and let it admonish and reprove you. Elisha inherited a double portion of the spirit of his master Elijah : he performed many notable miracles, he divided the waters of the river, he made iron to swim, he raised the dead to life, he employed the supernatural powers which were conferred upon him, in removing the miseries of his fellow creatures. Among these the leprosy was one, a disease which baffles the skill of the physician, which not medicine, but the immediate power of God alone can cure. Now, what saith the record ? What Israelitish lepers applied to the prophet, of the multitudes who were affected with this loathsome distemper ? Not so much as one. He was at home, among those of his own house ; the wretched patient, loathsome to himself, and a burden offensive to every one about him, chooses rather to continue an abomination, than to be beholden to an acquaintance, to an equal, to a prophet of his own country, for the miracle of cleansing. Not so the son of the stranger : Naaman, the Syrian, the commander of armies, the favourite of a prince, a worshipper of strange gods. He believes the report, he flies to the physician, he follows the prescription, he washes in Jordan, and becomes clean."

The conscience of his audience makes the application of our Saviour's doctrine ; and What ensues ? What always did, and always will, when the principle



of conscience is awakened, either humble and contrite submission to the reproof, and an honest endeavour to profit by it; or else a rancorous animosity against the reprover, the conformation of prejudice, a wilful exclusion of light, or a determined perseverance in what is known to be wrong. Unhappily the frequenters of the synagogue at Nazareth were of this last description. Their indignation falls, not as it ought to have done, on their own mean, unworthy, ungenerous, unmanly spirit, but on their kind, affectionate, gentle monitor. And what follows? Is it the cynical representation of some surly traducer of mankind; or is it truth and history? Merciful Father of mankind! must I believe that the very persons who just now gazed with delight on that super-angelic face, who listened with rapture to the accents of that celestial voice, who justly gloried in their townsman, companion and friend, are instantaneously converted into demons of hell? What, meditate, digest murder! the murder of innocence, truth and wisdom! What all of them! not one calm, moderate spirit to suggest milder counsels, to plead the cause of goodness, to arrest the hand of violence! No, not one. O human nature, what wert thou; and what art thou become! I tremble to think that I am a partaker of thee; of a "heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "They rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." And shall not fire come down from heaven, as it did once, and a second time, to avenge a slighter insult offered to a much inferior prophet? O no! "the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Behold a more glorious triumph, a miracle of grace and condescension, a triumph worthy of the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. "He, passing through the midst of them, went his way." Behold power and mercy united. Where they like the men of Sodom, stricken



with blindness? Were their hands, like Jeroboam's, dried up and rendered immovable? Were their eyes, like the disciples going to Emmaus, holden, that they should not know him? I stop to inquire. Suffice it to say, his "hour was not yet come," and they had no power at all over him but what was permitted of God. And vain is the contention of man against God: it is hard for thee, O persecutor, to "kick against the pricks."

In the history referred to by our Lord, and the instance of a miraculous supply of food to the widow of Serepta, in a season of extreme scarcity, as well as in the other equally noted instance of a miraculous cure of leprosy performed on the body of Naaman the Syrian, we perceive the dawning of the gospel day upon the Gentile world. They believed and obeyed the word of the prophet, and they obtained relief, while "the seed of Abraham after the flesh" remained unbelieving and impenitent. "Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." How God will deal in the judgment with those who never enjoyed the benefit of either the law or the gospel, it is not for us to determine. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" "But we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which, at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by



them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ?”

Among other evidences that the christian dispensation is from heaven, the universality of it is not the least. This act of grace contains no unkind exceptions. There is no prescribed region, or family or individual. The proclamation is, “ peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.” This dawning light was now in a progress unto “ the perfect day.” Though Christ’s personal ministry was, in the first instance, addressed “ to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” its influence quickly spread far beyond the confines of Judea. “ His fame went throughout all Syria ;” a woman of Canaan believed on him, and her daughter was healed : the Roman Centurion, who had been made partaker of the same precious faith, in like manner had power with God, and prevailed in behalf of his palsied servant. Some of our Lord’s immediate attendants lived to see “ the kingdom of God come with power.” “ The Centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus” on the cross, “ when they saw the earthquake, and those things that were done,” though unaccustomed to fear, “ they feared greatly,” and made this open confession, “ Truly this was the Son of God.”

The miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, in the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, opened a passage in all directions for the speedy diffusion of the truth as it is in Jesus, over all lands. Peter no longer trembles and denies his Master, but stands boldly up to plead his cause, and precious souls by thousands are added unto the Lord. Cured of his Jewish prejudices, by a vision from heaven, he descends to Cesarea, preaches the word of life to the Centurion Cornelius, and “ his kinsmen and near friends.” It is accompanied with power, and “ with



the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. That same apostle was spared to eddress epistles "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Philip, the evangelist, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." That evangelist finds a proselyte in the desert of Gaza, in a person "of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure." He, too, gladly receives the word, is baptized, and goes on his way rejoicing, to carry into those dark regions the light of the divine truth, and the Scripture is fulfilled which saith, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

Time would fail in tracing the progress, and marking the success, of him, who is emphatically denominated the apostle of the Gentiles, through the islands of the Mediterranean, over the states of Greece, in Italy, at Rome. John the beloved disciple, had the pleasure of despatching particular letters, dictated by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to the seven churches of Asia. He was one of those, then, concerning whom Christ said, in the passage already quoted, "verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." His life was prolonged to extreme old age. He saw the kingdom of his divine master established in Europe, in Asia, in Africa. The great western world was still unknown; but, in the wisdom of God, it too has emerged out of the bosom of the vast ocean, to swell the Redeemer's empire. To embrace the whole globe in its generous design. The period ap-



proaches, when "great voices in heaven" shall proclaim, saying; "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." "Though Israel," therefore, "be not gathered," Messiah "shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord:" for he saith of him; "it is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." And as the ancient dispensation contained many intimations of favour to the Gentile world, so the gospel contains and discloses a dawn of hope to the Jewish nation. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Some interpreters of note have remarked a coincidence between the duration of the great famine which afflicted Israel, in the days of Elias, and that of our Saviour's ministry from his baptism to his death, namely three years and six months. As during the former period, at the word of the prophet, heaven was shut up, and all elementary influence suspended, to the inexpressible distress of the whole land; so during the latter, through the mediation of a greater than Elias, full communication was opened. In the one we have displayed the severity of the law, in the other the grace of the gospel; in Elias, the minister of wrath and condemnation; In Jesus, the minister of mercy and reconciliation; the one inflicting a temporary curse, the other calling down an everlasting benediction; there the clouds bound up, and the dew restrained; here a "doctrine dropping as the rain, and speech distilling



as the dew ; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass." The prophet represents, in beautiful language, the blessedness of an open communication between earth and heaven : " It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth ; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy ; and I will say to them which were not my people, 'Thou art my people ; and they shall say, 'Thou art my God.'" But the contrast is dreadful ! " She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax ; and I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees." The prayer of faith is the channel of this interesting communication.

It is humiliating to observe, and to reflect on the uniform and unrelenting malignity of the human heart. That greatness, power, wealth should be envied, and the possessor hated and thrust at, is not so much an object of surprise. But that simplicity, innocence, kindness, beneficence should provoke hostility, would exceed belief, were not the proofs too numerous and too stubborn to be resisted. We justly detest the wickedness, injustice and ingratitude of the Nazarenes, in attempting to destroy their unassuming, unoffending townsman : but is the angry, the lofty spirit of man now subdued to the obedience and love of Christ ? Has not a daring attempt lately been made by a great nation, once denominated christian, to obliterate the name, and overwhelm the cause of Christ ? Wherefore change the ancient measurements of time ? It was in the hope of swallowing up the distinction of days, and thereby of sinking the observance of the Lord's day in the mass. With the abolition of the Sabbath the service of the sanctuary is



swept away ; and the spirit of christianity, it was presumed, would not long survive its forms and rites. Are there none among ourselves who express rancorous animosity against the worthy name which they so unworthily bear ? Is not the Lord's day profaned, and the temple deserted ; and, in defiance of the law of the land, to say nothing of the obligations of decency and religion, are not efforts made by persons high in place and station, to discredit and disuse the ordinances of the gospel, and thereby to bring the gospel itself into disrepute ? We say, however, concerning such men, in the spirit and words of the wise Gamaliel : “ Refrain from these men and let them alone : for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to naught : but if it be of God, *they* cannot overthrow it ; lest haply they be found even to fight against God.”

To this fell spirit in man, what a striking, what an amiable contrast have we in the temper and conduct of our blessed Lord ! To withdraw himself from among these ingrates is the only mark of displeasure expressed by him. He desisted from teaching persons who were determined not to learn ; “ He did not many mighty works there,” because they were liable to misapprehension, to misrepresentation. “ He, passing through the midst of them, went his way.” Thus men grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and he departs from them. And thus the apostles of the Lord, Paul and Barnabas, when “ the Jews, filled with envy, spake against them, contradicting and blaspheming,” they said ; “ It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you : but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” And is it no punishment to be forsaken of a friend ; a friend whom we have grieved and offended, who feels himself constrained to retire, but retires silently, slowly, reluctantly ? Little do men reflect what sorrow, what remorse they are treasuring up to themselves, in slighting, in neglecting a day of mer-



ciful visitation. It drew tears from the eyes of the compassionate friend of mankind: "And when he was come near he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

We conclude with pointing out the Saviour as a pattern of perseverance in well-doing. Nazareth is no longer a theatre of teaching and working. Does he therefore sullenly, resentfully, cease from discharging the duties of his high office? No, other cities will gladly receive him. "He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days." And what a course of active, unwearied beneficence did the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage exhibit! through evil report and good report, through opposition and discouragement, through sorrow and suffering, by night and by day, till, bowing his head, he could say, "it is finished." "Arm yourselves," therefore, christians, "with the same mind:" "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith:—consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XIV.

*Now, when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee: and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets; and he called unto them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.—MATT. iv. 12—22.*

**A**MONG the other means of arriving at *certainty*, respecting “the things wherein we have been instructed,” it may be of importance to compare the present state of christianity with its origin; to contrast the smallness of its beginnings with the greatness of its success;



to consider the real influence which a cause so unpromising has had on human affairs, and the changes which it actually has produced on the face of the globe. Who is its author? A mighty potentate, armed with sovereign power and authority? An invincible conqueror travelling in the greatness of his strength, at the head of triumphant legions, from victory to victory? An experienced statesman skilled in every art of intrigue, and amply furnished with all commanding gold, to gain over credulous, or to purchase the suffrages of corruptible multitudes? The reverse of all this is the fact. The author of our faith, christians, as has frequently been repeated, was the reputed son of a carpenter; he was brought up in an obscure village of a region proverbially contemptible, of a conquered country; he was destitute of means, of friends, of worldly wisdom; he was a pensioner on the bounty of others, and frequently without a place where to lay his head.

Will any one presume to allege that he associated with the great of this world, that he insinuated himself into the favour and counsels of the princes of the earth, that he went forth armed with their commission, and advanced in their name conquering and to conquer? No, history contradicts all this. He lived up to the age of thirty in the very depth of obscurity; his associates and coadjutors were few in number, men of mean parentage and parts, in the very lowest ranks of society, fishermen, the sons of fishermen. Did he employ, then, the arts of insinuation, address and flattery to captivate the vulgar? Did he teach an easy, palatable, pliant morality, and attract the countenance and support of the million, by gratifying their passions, by conniving at their vices, or by humouring their prejudices? No such thing. His life and doctrine were quite the reverse. He preached and exemplified mortification, and self-denial, and patient submission to painful and unmerited suffering, and renunciation of the world. Undoubtedly then his followers could not be numerous, nor his



reputation extensive; nor his power of long duration. This too is contradicted by matter of fact. No teacher can boast of so many disciples; no name is so widely diffused; and after a lapse of eighteen centuries, the field of his triumph is extended and extending, and his outstretched arms are expanded to embrace a globe.

How is all this to be accounted for? Who shall explain this accumulation of mystery? Consult, on the subject, the learned Jewish doctor of laws, whom we formerly quoted with respect. His reasoning upon it is as sound, and as conclusive now, as it was near two thousand years ago. "If this counsel or this work were of men, it must have come to naught; but because it is of God, it cannot be overthrown." Christianity is the cause of heaven, and therefore it hath prospered, and shall continue to prosper.

We have hitherto beheld our blessed Lord single and unconnected; gradually shewing himself to the world as a teacher sent from God. In the passage which has now been read, we find him laying the foundation of his church, forming and modelling his household, beginning to provide a succession of public teachers of his religion, who should carry on to the end of time, the instruction of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, the salvation of a perishing world. The career of John Baptist, his kinsman and forerunner, was now come to an end. That rigid moralist and honest reformer had, by speaking truth and acting faithfully, incurred the displeasure of an arbitrary despot, who cast him into prison, where he soon after fell a victim to the resentment of an abandoned woman. But this John had already given a repeated and public testimony to Jesus Christ, as the Messiah promised to the fathers, and as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And, at his baptism by John, God had confirmed that testimony by a voice from heaven.



As the Baptist's public labours drew towards a conclusion, those of Jesus Christ were advancing to their commencement; and, as we have seen, they were first employed for the instruction and relief of his kindred and townsmen of Nazareth, where he had been brought up. His benevolent services there, however, were most ungratefully requited, the minds of his auditors being poisoned with envy, and, as a necessary consequence, their hearts hardened through unbelief. Disappointed of success there, where it might have been so reasonably expected, he gives not up, in sullen dissatisfaction, the work which was given him to do, but leaving Nazareth, in the manner related in the preceding lecture, he proceeds to Capernaum, a town of Galilee, on the sea-coast, on the confines of the inheritance of the two tribes Zabulon and Nephthalim, denominated "Galilee of the Gentiles," from its proximity to the regions of Tyre and Sidon.

But what step of our Saviour's progress was unmarked by the finger of ancient prophecy, and consequently directed by a special interposition of Divine Providence? Isaiah, who had so clearly and fully described his character and offices, in the passage which he read and applied to himself, in the synagogue at Nazareth, has also clearly and undecidedly announced his visit to Capernaum, and the light and glory which his preaching and mighty works should diffuse over a region which lay buried in heathenish ignorance and idolatry. How runs the prophecy? "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphthalim, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." And what saith the history?



“ Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” In this too is not “ the arm of the Lord revealed?” Thus clearly does infinite wisdom foresee whatsoever shall come to pass: thus confidently doth unchangeable, unerring truth declare the end from the beginning, and thus irresistably doth the mighty power of God bring it to pass. And thus by a series of “ immutable things,” that “ God who cannot lie” is affording “ a strong consolation” to those “ who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

Jesus takes up the same theme which constituted the subject of John’s preaching, namely the doctrine of repentance; that humbling doctrine, which regards a world lying in wickedness, ignorance and misery so deplorable, as to be fitly represented by the powerful and expressive imagery of “ darkness” and “ the region and shadow of death;” that compassionate doctrine which stretches out a friendly hand to the guilty and the wretched; that reviving doctrine which gently draws the trembling sinner to the God of mercy, and which forbids the vilest to despair. And by what argument is this salutary doctrine recommended and enforced, by both the forerunner, and by the greater who followed after him? “ The King of heaven is at hand:” the reign of grace, the dominion of love; a new display of divine perfection, even God descending to dwell with men upon earth, that he might prepare men to “ sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” What a fulness of



time was now come when "the Prophet of the Highest," like the sun, "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," began to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace!" The great sovereign in this heavenly kingdom, in a manner peculiar to himself, announces his own public entry on the exercise of his authority; the Prince of Peace cries aloud, and proclaims "the acceptable year of the Lord!"

We said, in a manner peculiar to himself: for it looks as if he were meaning to court neglect, to excite compassion, or to provoke contempt, not to engage attention or to command respect. When we behold the carpenter's son forming an humble alliance with three or four simple, illiterate, unconnected fishermen, the inhabitants of a little town on the coast of the sea of Galilee, Who is so timid as to take the alarm? Who is so sanguine as to expect any thing from such a confederacy? Who is such a visionary as to prognosticate from it the downfall of idolatry, and the revolution of empires? But this proved indeed the grand crisis in human affairs. It produced a universal and everlasting change in the state of the world. It was the establishment of a kingdom destined to control, and, at length to swallow up every other; nay, which was to outlast the sun, and survive the system of nature; which was to prove the foundation whereon to rear a new and more glorious fabric of creation, to serve as a theatre whereon to display wonders which shall leave the pride of kings at an infinite distance behind. "All these things shall be dissolved: nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." On the day that Jesus called "Simon



and Andrew his brother, James and John his brother" from their boats and fishing-nets, imperial Rome shook to the foundation ; the Jewish hierarchy expired ; Satan's empire fell ; and on their ruins began to arise " a kingdom which cannot be moved ;" the predicted throne and kingdom of David's Lord, which the zeal of the Lord of hosts was " to order, and to establish with judgment and with justice, even for ever."

These simple men, with simple names, then obscure, unnoticed, unknown, were hastening to acquire a celebrity which speedily eclipsed the titles of royalty, and the glare of imperial purple. " Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ ;" John, " the disciple whom Jesus loved," are held in lasting and grateful remembrance by the nations of the earth, while the memory of their mighty contemporaries, a Tiberius, a Nero, and a Domitian, is rotting in the dust, or preserved from oblivion by a note of infamy, and a sentiment of detestation. In the former we revere the benefactors of the human race ; from the latter we turn away with abhorrence, as from so many monsters. The despised Galileans became " fishers of men," converted myriads to the faith and hope of the gospel, and, to this day, by their writings, continue to minister to the edification and comfort of the christian world ; and now that the papal throne is sinking after the imperial into utter annihilation, the throne of those humble followers of the Lamb is, like that of their divine master, built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

The power of persuasion accompanied the call of Jesus : " Walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren ; and he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Presently after, he saw another pair of brothers, pursuing the accustomed labours of their humble occupation ; " and he called them. And they immediately left the ship, and their



father, and followed him." It will be said that they had very little to lose, and therefore merit not the praise of having made a very costly sacrifice. No man can make a greater sacrifice than that of his all, whether it be much or little. When a person deliberately resigns the means of earning his bread, he casts himself entirely on Providence. The woman of Sarepta who, at the word of the prophet, brought her last morsel of bread to satisfy his hunger, exhibited a most illustrious display of confidence in God; as did likewise that other poor widow, whom Jesus beheld casting her two mites into the treasury, and whose liberality he so highly extols: "he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." It is not the quantity given, but the spirit in which it is bestowed, that stamps value on the gift. Peter indeed, on a certain occasion, seems to have highly rated the surrender which he made, and to have deemed himself fully entitled to a compensation: "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus admits the claim: he undervalues not the sacrifice which affection has offered up, and points out the glorious compensation which he was ready to make: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Such is the unbounded generosity of him who saith in another place: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a



cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

But there must have been an inconceivable something in the manner and address of Jesus Christ, which could induce men in circumstances such as those of the disciples, to forego the very means of subsistence, and to follow him at all hazards. They feel the attraction of true goodness, but have not as yet any apprehension of the person, nature and mission of the master whom they were preferring to all worldly relations, possessions and prospects. But their choice was shortly justified, as they attended his footsteps through the cities of Galilee: and it is highly grateful to find a first favourable impression, completely confirmed, or far exceeded by knowledge and experience. They were to be made witnesses for Christ to all nations, every opportunity is therefore afforded them of the most intimate communication with him "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them:" that they might declare to the world "that which was from the beginning, which they heard, which they saw with their eyes, which they looked upon, and which their hands did handle of the word of life." Through a channel, and on the testimony of witnesses, so little liable to suspicion, "the truth as it is in Jesus" has been transmitted to us.

The mode of conveying to the minds of men "the gospel of the kingdom," next arrests our attention. He went *teaching in their synagogues*. This consisted, if we may judge from his practice at Nazareth, in rehearsing aloud, before worshipping assemblies, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, either in their order, or passages selected for special occasions, and particularly applied. And this in every age and state of the church, ever since a revelation came down from heaven, was and is the ground-work of public instruction and devotion; even the word of the living



God, the standard of truth, the foundation of faith, the rule of life.

The second mode of instruction employed by our Lord, was "*preaching* the gospel of the kingdom." This seems to have been something more than a simple reading of the Scriptures, followed by an equally simple application of the word read to its appropriate object, as in the instance which has already been under review: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The word translated *to preach* is derived from a noun which signifies *herald*, public crier, the messenger of prince to prince, of nation to nation. Thus the prophet Isaiah might be said *to preach* to the men of his day, when, by the command of God, he executed the office of a herald; "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." And thus, in strictness of speech, Christ himself might be said *to preach*, when "in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In a greater latitude, *to preach* is, from a given topic, to argue, to exhort, to reprove, to encourage; to assail the heart, in the view of producing conviction, and of regulating the life through every avenue of the soul, the intellect, the passions, the very senses. Thus Paul on Mars-hill at Athens, "preached Jesus and the resurrection." Thus also at Troas, after breaking of bread, "he preached, and continued his speech until midnight." And as Christ himself thus preached, "he sent out his twelve disciples to preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and with this solemn charge he left them, when he ascended into heaven: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to



observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." And thus until now, through the operation of his mighty power, "the foolishness of preaching," the preaching of "Christ crucified" is "to them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

*Teaching* and *preaching* were accompanied and supported by the display of *miraculous powers*, all employed in doing good. "He healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people." This general description of human wretchedness, to which the promised Messiah was to apply a remedy, is followed by a sad enumeration of the several particulars which compose this depressing aggregate ; some of them were more common, and in many cases removable by human skill and the use of ordinary means ; some were more obstinate and hopeless, as the palsy, lunacy, which in general bid defiance to the healing art, and terminate at length, the one in the dissolution of the body, the other in a total derangement of the mental powers. This catalogue is closed by an extraordinary malady, seemingly peculiar to that period and spot of the world, diabolical possession. Attempts have been made to explain away this terrible affliction into a species of madness or epilepsy to which the human frame has in all ages been deplorably subjected, but which can with no propriety be ascribed to the operation of malignant spirits. The instances, however, both of the existence of the disease, and of the cure, are too numerous, and too specific, to be confounded with mental disorder or bodily infirmity ; and every attempt of the kind ought to be resisted, as a blow aimed at all historical evidence, as an insidious design to limit the agency of spiritual beings, and to measure all existing powers by those of man. The influence of "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" has no need to be



demonstrated. And wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible that, for a season, and for purposes by us inscrutable, this evil spirit might be permitted to harass and convulse the bodies of men, that the superior power of the Son of God might be manifested in recovering, both in body and in spirit, "out of the snare of the devil, them who are taken captive by him at his will?"

The whole taken together, the *teaching*, the *preaching* and the *miraculous cures* performed by Christ, in their combined effect, amount to this: There is not an evil which man is liable to, in his body, his mind, his estate, of yesterday or of many years standing, but what must yield to the wisdom, the power, the grace of Christ. It was the union of those several methods of conducting his divine mission that gave weight to each separately, and to the combined whole. Miracles without instruction might have amused, might have excited admiration and astonishment. But we know how very transient and inefficient impressions of this sort are. The wonder ceases, it is driven out by a new prodigy, and this, in its turn, gives place to a third, and so on in succession, till extraordinary become mere common things, and no salutary effect is produced. But when the person who has been trying to instruct me, and whose lessons I found wearisome, and treated with neglect, takes a kindly interest in me and my concerns, makes my health and comfort his own; when he interposes seasonably, condescendingly, in behalf of myself, my child, my friend, my neighbour; and not only seasonably, but powerfully, effectually, in a way that far transcends the usual course of things; when I behold my teacher and my benefactor to be one and the same, the same man who vouchsafed to point out truth and tell me my duty, giving sight to a man that was born blind, and raising the dead to life, then the lesson comes with force to the heart and conscience. Nicodemus,



the Jewish ruler, felt and acknowledged the irresistible power of this combination. He said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Thus the simplicity of doctrine is dignified and impressed by the lustre of miracle, and the effect of miracle, on the other hand, acquires permanency, from the stability, importance and usefulness of the doctrine.

The preaching of the gospel is no longer supported and confirmed by miracles. Granted. It is no longer necessary that it should. While supernatural, external aid was necessary, such aid was communicated. In Jesus Christ, and in what he did, taught and suffered, the Scriptures were fulfilled. He authenticated his commission by the seal of miracles. Under that seal he executed it; and that seal he transmitted to his immediate disciples. Under it they acted, and the world was christianized. Miracles have effected all that they were intended to effect, and the gospel now rests on its own unmovable basis. What need of the formality of a seal to a writing which bears the impress of Deity on every line, on every letter? You call for miraculous proof of its divine original. That very call, in the nineteenth century from its first establishment, is the proof. Had it not been the cause of God and truth, it must long ere now have ceased to be a subject of discussion. When the opposition of avowed enemies, and the treachery of pretended friends, are taken into the account, that christianity should at all exist, is the greatest wonder that ever was presented to the world. You call for proof; it is at hand. What political, philosophical, moral system ever lasted so long, or could boast so many proselytes? What system is so favourable to science, to intellectual, civil, moral improvement? Introduce the spirit of Christ, and despotism and slavery expire together; man is settled on a basis of equality which dis-



turbs not the order of society, and a prospect is opened of a state of being in which all the disorders now prevalent shall be completely rectified. You call for proof; it is at hand. Go to hamlets and huts; look to empty srips and exhausted penury, to the field of painful unproductive toil, and to the bed of languishing; see Rachel weeping for her children, because they are not, and David mourning over living, ungracious children. The sufferers repine not, they charge not God foolishly; they commit themselves to him who clotheth the lily and feedeth the raven; labour makes rest sweet, and hope puts a pillow under the drooping head; the heart is poured out before God, and the countenance is no more sad. Is this no miracle? In what school of the philosophers are such lessons taught? And let it be observed that these, and such as these, are not the glaring, splendid triumphs of christianity, but its daily, noiseless, unobtruding, unostentations operation.

“Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” Is miraculous proof of the divinity of the gospel still demanded? It is at hand. By what instruments does the great Jehovah still support and extend the Mediator’s kingdom? By men themselves feeble, ignorant, forlorn, like those to whom they minister; men standing in need of the self-same instruction, consolation, and support which they are called to administer to others: men, in general, as little qualified by natural endowments, or by the acquisitions of literature, to subvert the kingdom of Satan and to build up that of Messiah, as the fisherman of Galilee were to shake the throne of the Cæsars, and to restore that of David, which was fallen down. It is in every age the same. “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save



them that believe." "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth, any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

Still call for proof! What kind and degree of proof will satisfy or silence infidelity? Shall the sun stand still and the moon be stayed? Are not the constant and uniform motions and appearances of those great luminaries an equal, or a superiour demonstration of sovereign power and wisdom? Shall the shadow upon the sundial of Ahaz be accelerated or retarded ten degrees? What can it prove more than is done by a steady and regular progression? Thousands are fed miraculously, at once, by a few loaves and fishes. Is the miracle less which day by day feeds the innumerable tribes of the human race, by a process of vegetation, and of animal increase? The producing hand is the same in both cases, the manner of production makes all the difference. Should one rise from the dead, will ye believe and repent? One has arisen from the dead; but infidelity still holds out. And we must leave it to its consequences: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

As the evidence, so the doctrine of christianity is the same that it was from the beginning. Whether to the Jew or to the Greek; the preaching of John or of Christ himself, of the primitive disciples, or of the ministers of to-day, it is a "testifying of repentance toward God, and of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." From the beginning to the end of the world, the call is, "Turn ye, turn ye Why will ye die?" "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." The command and the promise are blendid together: "Believe on the Lord



Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," and they are addressed equally to the jailor at Philippi, and to the multitudes at Jerusalem : " Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The universality of guilt demands universality of contrition and reformation ; and there is but one " blood " that " cleanseth from all sin ; neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

What other teacher, what other legislator did not find himself under the necessity of suspending, of relaxing, of mitigating the severity of the law ; of accommodating himself to times, tempers, and circumstances ? Even Moses himself was obliged to temporize, and to connive at the breach of the law, in favour of the hardness of the people's hearts. But the great christian legislator has but one unvarying, inflexible code, for the prince and the peasant, for the noble and the ignoble, for the slave and his master. It alone suits all nations, all seasons, all situations. Among the other marks of Deity this is not the least. Christianity is a religion, not for this district or for that, but for the globe ; not for the Jew or the Greek, but for mankind, and thus approves itself to be of him who " hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Nay more, christianity is a religion for both earth and heaven, for time and for eternity. Its spirit is the spirit of love, and perfect love is the fulfilling of the law and the perfection of felicity. " Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three : but the greatest of these is charity." Wherefore ? Faith and hope are adapted to a state of trial and suffering ; they imply doubt, difficulty, imperfection : " but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." But after the exercise of faith and hope has ceased, charity is arrived at its maturity ; a maturity



that knows no decay. Thus are “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Once more we ask, Is the history which we have been reviewing, the history of a mere man? Is there nothing superiour, nothing divine in this mode of teaching and acting? What mortal could have engaged in such an enterprise, with such support and have prospered? What human power and skill reach to the paralytic, the lunatic, the leper? What arm of flesh can control “the prince of the power of the air?” What eloquence of man can persuade the rich or the poor, to give up every thing? What tongue can say, with effect, to the wind and to the sea, “Peace, be still?” If these are not proofs of a present Deity, What proof can be demanded, What proof can be given? Our knees bow, our tongues confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Amen.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XV.

### BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my father: and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.—LUKE X. 17—22.*

**W**ISE and good men have attempted to present an artificial arrangement of the several events recorded in the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or what they call a *Harmony of the Gospels*. It is both a pleasing and a useful amusement to ascertain the dates and to settle the order of events; and labours of this kind, merit high commendation. But the native majesty and simplicity of Scripture stand in



no need of artificial arrangement. The whole spiritual building is august and venerable, and each particular part has its peculiar beauty and excellency. To be assured that such things were done, is of infinitely higher importance than to determine the exact series of succession. Every line of the history of Christ is a radiant display of divine perfection ; every step he takes leaves an impress of benignity behind it. It was predicted concerning him, that he should be “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But it was likewise predicted, that he should “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” The words which have been read contain the accomplishment of this last prophecy. In all our affliction he was afflicted ; let us weep with him : and when he “rejoices in spirit,” let us also “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.”

The followers of Christ had now increased to a great multitude. And need we wonder, if such doctrine, supported by such purity and dignity of character, and by such mighty works, had the power of attracting attention and respect wherever he went ? “There followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan,” Out of those multitudes he selected first twelve, with the peculiar designation of disciples and apostles, to whom he imparted a portion of his spirit and power : “He gave them authority over all devils, and to cure diseases, to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Afterwards “he appointed other seventy, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come.” It was on occasion of the return of those seventy, after having fulfilled their mission, and upon the report which they made of their success, that Jesus broke out into this holy rapture : “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven



and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Let us trace the process.

The evangelist records, at full length the commission granted to those seventy, but gives us no particulars respecting their progress. These must be collected from the account which they themselves give of it. *The seventy returned again with joy.* Every thinking man enters on a difficult or a hazardous enterprise with very mixed emotions. He feels the consequence attached to an arduous and important station ; he feels the pressure of responsibility, and the solicitude of general expectation pointed towards him. The animating stimulus of hope is repressed by the dread of miscarriage. It is a terrible thing to return foiled, disappointed, discomfitted. The eve of a battle is a season of solicitude. But when the conflict is over, when success is no longer doubtful, the soul enters into a state of perfect composure. Mournful is the reflection, " I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain ;" but how complete is the triumph of an apostle reviewing a successful ministry, and looking forward to the glorious recompense of reward. " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day." Such was the triumph of the seventy, having finished their circuit of the cities of Galilee.

They express peculiar satisfaction in reporting to their divine master, that " even the devils were subject to them, through his name. It was matter of great joy to them, that their preaching had been acceptable and useful ; that they had been the honoured instruments in his hand, to " heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease ;" to predispose the minds of men to receive the kingdom of God, by



healing their bodies : but to prevail against the great adversary who had so long tyrannized over the nations, leading them “ captive at his will,” this filled up the measure of their joy. At the same time, they modestly disclaim all personal merit. They humbly ascribe the glory of all this wonderful success to the potent name of their almighty Lord. “ Jesus himself exercises underived power over universal nature.” “ What a word is this !” exclaimed the astonished multitudes, “ for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out ;” but the disciples have power and prevail only through virtue communicated to them. “ Without me,” says he, “ ye can do nothing :” and then is the believer most strong when he rests on imparted strength. Now those disciples were speedily to be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, carrying with them the doctrine and the name, that is the wonder-working power of their master. Wherever, therefore, virtue accompanied that name there was Christ himself present ; and of whom but of Deity can it be affirmed that he is in more than one place, in many places, in all space at once ? God challenges omnipresence as his own : “ Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off ? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him ? saith the Lord : do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord.” “ Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them ; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down : and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence ; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.” The great Author and Finisher of our faith asserts to himself the same divine attribute, and connects with it perpetuity of duration, in the charge which he gave to his disciples before he ascended up into heaven ; “ Go ye teach *all* nations ;” there



there is a claim of universal power and presence ; and he adds the gracious assurance : “ and lo, *I am* with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Here are omnipresence and endless unchanging existence united. When the viper dropped harmlessly from the apostle’s hand, in the island of Melita, there was the name, the presence and the power of Christ. When Philip, in the desert of Gaza, “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch, and converted him to the christian faith, there was the name, the presence and the power of Christ. When John, in the isle that is called Patmos, “heard a great voice, saying, I am Alpha and Omega,” there was the name, the presence and the power of Christ. That presence, my brethren, we hope and trust, is in the midst of this worshipping assembly, and presiding over it ; is to consecrate that table and those elements of bread and wine : is to sanctify and ennoble our communion and fellowship. But it is not confined to this place. It is at this moment diffusing light, and life, and joy over myriads of worshippers in the east, in the west, in the south, in the north. It is “the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea :” “in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee.” “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

This subjection of the devils to the disciples, through the name of Christ, Jesus in his reply contemplates as the beginning of Satan’s complete and final overthrow as a step toward the total subversion of his kingdom. “He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven :” “when I sent you forth armed with my commission, and furnished you with power to execute it, I saw swift destruction overtaking the destroyer. You have begun a conquest which I am proceeding to accomplish. You have subjected his mischievous agents. I shall bruise Sa-



tan himself under your feet shortly.” “ His usurped dominion, as “ the god of this world,” as “ the prince of the power of the air,” as “ the ruler of the darkness of this world,” is hastening “ to expire. Rooted, established as it may seem to be, it shall vanish in a moment, rapid as a flash of lightning, which disappears before it is well seen.” The expression is in use with both the sacred and profane authors. The downfall of the king of Babylon is, by the prophet, represented under this bold imagery : “ How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground !” The Roman orator says of Anthony, “ thou hast dragged down thy colleague from heaven ;” and when Pompey the great was hurled from his proud pre-eminence, Cicero represents him as having “ fallen from the stars.” The time to favour a darkened, enslaved world was now come, and Jesus triumphs in the near prospect of the conversion of the Gentile nations “ from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

The former mission of the seventy was limited to “ the cities and places, whither he himself would come ;” now their sphere is enlarged, and with an extended commission, fresh assurances are given of divine protection wherever they went. “ Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” After the resurrection from the dead, an unbounded career is set before them, the vast globe is spread out as the scene of action, the whole human race, through all ages and generations is the grand object of the gospel ministry, and powers adequate to the undertaking are granted. “ Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”—“ and these signs shall follow them that believe ; in my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not



hurt them : they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Here every obstruction is removed, all opposition dies, every enemy is subdued, and the scriptures are fulfilled, which say : " Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain : " " Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." " 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder : the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.' Thus was the serpent's head bruised, and the triumph of the Redeemer completed. Compare spiritual things with spiritual, the commission of the great head of the church with the execution of it, the promised support of the apostles with what they were enabled actually to achieve, as the facts stand recorded in the book of their acts.

But Jesus points out to his disciples a purer source of joy than even a grant of miraculous powers could bestow. It was highly honourable and unspeakably grateful to be invested with authority to control evil spirits, to cure inveterate distemper and quicken the dead, and to enjoy perfect personal security amidst snares, and dangers and the shadow of death, to speak with tongues and instruct the ignorant. But these and other choice gifts of God have been conferred on the unworthy. Great talents are not always sanctified to the possessor. Beneficial to others they may be unprofitable or even pernicious to the man himself. He may speak with the tongues of men and of angels : he may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; he may have all faith so as to be able to remove mountains ; he may lay out his whole estate in works of charity, and even submit to suffer martyrdom, and after all remain destitute of that principle which alone admits into the kingdom of hea-



ven. The magicians of Egypt performed wonders, but they served only to harden the heart against God. Balaam was a true prophet, but "he loved the wages of unrighteousness;" he knew and approved the better course, but he deliberately persevered in the worse. Simon had the art of bewitching the people of Samaria with sorceries; "to him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God." "He himself believed also, and was baptized," but his "heart was not right in the sight of God;" he was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Where God has bestowed much, he will expect much, and in proportion to the number and value of the gifts received is the account that must be given. Who was equally honoured with the apostle of the Gentiles, by extraordinary communications from Heaven? but "it is not expedient for me," says he "to glory:" "of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." In what then does a Paul, in what does every believer chiefly rejoice and glory? In the composing reflection, "my name is written in the book of life." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Compared to this, what a poor trifle it is for a man to know that his name is in an opu-



lent testator's will for a splendid bequest, were it even the reversion of a kingdom? This is that "peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep the heart and mind through Christ Jesus," and which the world can neither give nor take away.

This is "the hour," the eventful hour when "Jesus rejoiced in spirit:" the hour when the great sovereign of the universe was subjecting spiritual wickednesses to human agents, and perfecting praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings; when all the glories of the kingdom of heaven unveiled themselves to his view, and the nations of the earth hastened into it. The scenes of sorrow and suffering which must intervene, are absorbed in contemplating the blessed effects which they were to produce." "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Here we behold our great pattern setting us the example of referring every thing to God, as the first cause and the last end of all; who acts by his own uncontrollable, inexplicable, supremacy, and with a view to his own glory. But we are not to understand our Lord as giving thanks that "the wise and prudent" were kept in a state of ignorance respecting the things of God, but that while they were so, while they remained under the power of wilful blindness, it had graciously pleased God to manifest these things to the comparatively simple and illiterate. We have a similar mode of expression, and which falls under the same mode of interpretation, in the epistle to the Romans, vi. 17, where the apostle says: "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin;" meaning obviously, "that although, that whereas you were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you:" So here, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of



heaven and earth, that while the wise in their own conceits, and the prudent in the estimation of the world, neglect and despise the things which belong to their peace, their all-importance is discerned, felt, prized and improved by persons, lowly in their own sight, contemptible in the eyes of men, but estimable in the eyes of Him who “resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

Jesus ascribes to the Father universality of dominion, under the title of “Lord of heaven and earth :” and he resolves all creatures and all events into divine sovereignty : “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” “He giveth not account of any of his matters.” “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ?” That which is good in the eyes of man is frequently a sore evil ; but that which is good in the sight of God must be good in itself ; and when Deity shall have executed the whole plan of his providence, the myriads of his saints and angels shall with one voice proclaim “all is good.” “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever.”

Having made this ascription of universal power, authority and property to the Father, he represents himself as invested in an equal extent of dominion, as sole and sovereign administrator of the world which he made, which he upholds, and which he came to redeem. “All things are delivered to me of my Father.” God is “Lord of heaven and earth.” Now these two words imply all space, with all the beings which inhabit the worlds “visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers.” To the utmost extent of the words, therefore, and of their import, the sovereignty of God Redeemer extends, and it is asserted and ascribed neither in a single passage, nor in doubtful terms. All power,” says he in another



place “is given unto me in heaven and in earth :” “authority to execute judgment also ;” “power over all flesh, to give eternal life.” “The Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man ; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” Now this is either mere pretension, unfounded as that of the devil over “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,” or it is a claim of right : and who but God can support such a claim ? Who but God can possess and exercise the power of quickening the dead, of executing judgment upon all, not only according to their works, but according to their most secret thoughts, and of bestowing eternal life ? Is a creature, a mere man like ourselves, to be entrusted with, is he capable of managing such an empire ? No ; Where *all* power, then, is lodged, there is Deity ; “in that he puts all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.” Behold, christian, and rejoice in spirits the powers of darkness prostrate under the feet of the Prince of Peace : He “maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire,” and “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?” Behold the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession ; “He must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet.” We, my beloved brethren, are part of the *all things* which are delivered by the Father unto the Son ; and the precious deposit is securely placed : Thine they were, and thou gavest them me :—those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is “lost :” and you are going this day solemnly to deliver up yourselves to him, to be taught by his spirit, to be governed by his laws, to be protected by his arm, to be supplied by the providential care ; therefore



“ ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

It is added, “ and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” That is, the nature, the excellency, and dignity of the godhead can be known only by Deity. God is infinite in all his perfections, but in contemplating infinity all created understanding is lost. This reciprocal knowledge of the Father and the Son is itself a mystery inscrutable, for it presents at once plurality and unity ; which human reason sinks under. “ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” If man has been enabled to form any right notion of God, he is indebted for it to the revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. That revelation has unfolded God’s purpose and grace, before the world began. That revelation has explained the history of Providence through ages and generations past. That revelation has disclosed an eternal duration to come, for unfolding, in endless succession, the inexhaustible treasure of the knowledge of “ the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” Every past, every present, every future discovery of the divine counsels, and of their execution, is the operation of the great light of the world ; “ for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

If such were the honour and the power conferred on the twelve, and on the seventy simple Galileans ; if through the grace of Christ they not only exceed the attainments of science, and the operations of art, but exercise authority over the devil and his angels, then what may not man become ? What bounds shall be set to the progress of an immortal being, “ the new man,



which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?" The eye of sense discerns a frail child of dust, sinking under a load of growing infirmity; "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" "through fear of death subjected to bondage." The eye of faith beholds in that same forlorn creature, one hastening unto the resurrection of the dead, about to assume a glorious body fashioned after the similitude of that of a risen and glorified Redeemer, arising "to meet the Lord in the air," triumphing over death, and "him who has the power of death," "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and changing into the same image from glory to glory."

Christ has taught us, my brethren, to resort to the radical source of consolation: "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." It is a pleasant and honourable feeling to take complacency in an illustrious or even reputable descent; to reflect on the attainment of eminence of station by eminence in talent; to contemplate wealth earned by industry and fair dealing. But these, and such advantages as these, are transient. They may be marred and embittered by untoward circumstances. But to meditate on an inalienable, unalterable good, running through the whole progress of duration, increasing continually in lustre and value; to think that all is the free gift of a Father, whose love is not liable to change, whose bounty is inexhaustible, whose power sustains the worlds visible and invisible, and whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting: this soothes the soul to peace, this sweetens the bitterest morsel, this quenches the flame of the fiery trial, this disarms the king of terrors. "These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God; and the seven stars." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels."



The highest privileges which christianity confers, and the fairest prospect which it opens, powerfully recommend the spirit of humanity. Is thy name written in heaven? What hand wrote it there? Might not the hand that wrote blot it out again? Has not thy own right hand made many a dreadful attempt to erase the signature? If it has found a place on that hallowed page, if it has been permitted to remain there, if it has not in fatherly displeasure been for ever obliterated, it is all of free sovereign grace. Art thou an heir of "a kingdom which cannot be moved?" "it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," have grace, whereby you may "serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." The highest and the holiest are also the humblest of beings. With whom does "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," delight to dwell? "With him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He who is most humble has the greatest similitude to his divine master, and to be like Christ is to possess the highest glory which the creature is capable of attaining. "Learn of me," says he, not to walk upon the water or rebuke the wind, not to open the eyes of the blind or quicken the dead, but "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"Jesus rejoiced in spirit," as he contemplated the rise, the progress, the consummation of his kingdom, and the correspondent downfall of the empire of sin and Satan. He is the same who wept over the grave of Lazarus, who "groaned in the spirit and was troubled," in sympathy with the wo of others; the same who beheld the devoted city, "and wept over it;" the same who in the agony of Gethsemane exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Let our sorrows and joys flow from the same sources with his. Are the ravages of time and death



presented to our view, or the still more dreadful ravages, which issue in death, committed by “the carnal mind which is enmity against God,” and hatred to man? Are we the spectators of the progress of moral corruption from evil to worse, till all is lost? Can we behold it unmoved? “Fools make a mock at sin,” but every serious spirit is very differently affected. “I beheld the transgressors,” says the psalmist, “and was grieved because they kept not thy word. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because they keep not thy law.” On the other hand, how delightful is it, to mark the progress of goodness; “the path of the just as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;” to behold “a brand plucked out of the fire,” a soul saved from death, an heir born into the kingdom of God! This causes “joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God.” This is that “travail of his soul,” which the Redeemer “shall see, and shall be satisfied.” This is the dawning of that eternal day when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” That we all may be found in that company, partake of that joy, assist in raising those songs, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### PRAYER IN CONSECRATING THE ELEMENTS.

We thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for all thy inexpressible, all thy inconceivable goodness to the children of men. Thou didst form the first human body of “dust of the ground,” and thou didst breathe into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul, capable of knowing, of admir-



ing, of loving, and of enjoying the glorious excellencies of the divine nature. Under thy creative benediction he increased, and multiplied, and replenished the earth. But man that was in honour continued not. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin has passed upon all men. Nevertheless, God who is rich in mercy pitied and spared, and said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." To guilty man, driven out from paradise, a door of grace opened, a dawn of hope arose. That dawning light, that day-spring from on high, through thy favour, waxed brighter and brighter, till it reached meridian splendour. The fulness of time came, when "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets," was pleased to speak "unto us by his Son, the heir of all things," who "made the worlds, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." But he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" He was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief:" and "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." "Which things the angels desire to look into;" let our souls rejoice and adore.

To thee, voluntarily humbled, to thee, highly exalted Saviour, our knees shall bow: that name which is above every name our tongue shall confess; "the love of Christ constraineth us:" "we love him: because he first loved us." And what proof, blessed Lord, what proof of love art thou this day demanding of thine infinitely indebted creatures? Not to suffer the loss of all things, not to go to prison and to death for thee, not to give our body to be burnt, not to give



but to receive : “ Take and eat, Take and drink, Do this in remembrance of Me.” Of a truth thy commandments are not grievous ; thy yoke is easy, and thy burden is light. Draw us, we will run after thee ; these are cords of a man, these are bands of love. We hear the command and we obey. We present our bodies a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service. We devote the superiour powers of our immortal spirits to the contemplation of the great mystery of godliness, that we “ may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

We employ, risen and exalted Redeemer, we employ these elements of bread and wine as a memorial of thy dying love, because, in the near prospect of death, thou wert pleased, by giving thanks over them, to set them apart to this sacred purpose. We would, after thy example, look up to our Father in heaven, and give thanks for all the blessings which they commemorate, for redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of free sovereign grace ; for the abolishing of death, and for all the exceedingly great and precious promises, and the glorious prospects of life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.

In thy name we solemnly separate from a common to a hallowed use, so much of this bread and of this wine as we are now to employ in commemorating the death of Christ, his body broken, and his blood shed, as a propitiation for the sin of the world. And over these sacred symbols we again solemnly dedicate ourselves unto thee, to be disposed of by thy providence, to be governed by thy laws, to be guided by thy spirit, to be accepted through thy intercession. Thee having not seen we love ; in thee, though now we see thee not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable,



and full of glory ; receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. In thy presence we become witnesses to each other, and we call angels and men to witness, that we subscribe with our hand unto the Lord, in trembling hope that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, among the living in the heavenly Jerusalem. And in this blessed hope we would, with one heart and voice, ascribe to God in Christ, the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, now, and for evermore. Amen. .

### ADDRESS TO COMMUNICANTS AT THE SACRAMENTAL TABLE.

To sit down at one table, to partake of the same fare, is the happiest view of domestic comfort, and of friendly intercourse. The body and the mind are refreshed at once. The bond of union is strengthened and sweetened between the father and mother, between parents and their children, among brothers and sisters, among kindreds and friends. To the enjoyment of that pure and exalted felicity, my brethren, we are now invited ; and with the prospects of immortality blend the endearing charities of human life. The great master of our gospel repast is not now indeed the object of sense, but he is assuredly with us, he contemplates with complacency our common faith and hope, our mutual affection. He rejoices in spirit while he beholds those for whom he died, remembering his death, obeying his commandments, living under the influence of his spirit, advancing in his strength, toward the kingdom of heaven. Him not not having seen ye love, and ye look forward to the day when ye shall be like him, for ye shall see him as he is.

Communicants, ye are elevated to the summit of an exceeding high mountain, but not by the spirit of de-



lusion, to survey airy or earthly kingdoms, and a glory unsubstantial and transient ; but by the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, to contemplate a kingdom which cannot be moved, a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. You survey an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away : not with the feeling of a Balaam, who beheld from the high places of Baal, the goodly tents of Jacob, and the tabernacles of Israel, in which he had neither part nor lot ; nor with the emotions of a Moses, who from Pisgah viewed the land flowing with milk and honey, into which he must not enter ; but with the confidence and composure of an Abraham, to whom God said ; “ Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward : Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it : for I will give it unto thee ; ” but with the rapture of a Stephen, who expiring exclaimed : “ Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” That ye, christians, may through grace be made partakers of the same divine consolation, We administer unto you, and partake with you, the commanded memorial of the sufferings and death of the Redeemer of mankind.

“ The Lord in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread : and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me.”

How powerfully emphatical every word is ! the bread of nature, in order to become the aliment of the body is bruised, and broken, and passes through the fire : “ The bread of life, which came down from heaven,” says Christ in his doctrine, “ is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” “ It pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief : ”



behold him buffeted of wicked men, scourged, his head crowned with thorns, his hands and his feet pierced, his soul poured out unto death. And for what end? His body, my sinful fellow-creature, was “broken *for you*.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And what does he demand in return? *Do this in remembrance of me*. Blessed Jesus! if thou hadst bidden us do some great thing, would we not have cheerfully complied? How much rather then, when the yoke of love is imposed? We come at thy call; “We will remember the name of the Lord our God;” “O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.”

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”

In drinking together, my christian friends, from this cup, we joyfully acquiesce in the new, and better, and well-ordered covenant, “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator,” and “established upon better promises;” a covenant which makes provision not only for human infirmity, but for the deepest and most malignant guilt, and which affords not merely a temporary relief, but confers an unchangeable and everlasting security. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they



shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And what is the seal of this better covenant? It is before you. "This cup," says the Saviour, "is the New Testament in my blood:" the wine in the cup is a symbolical representation of my blood shed for the remission of sin. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot;" "slain from the foundation of the world," and which "cleanseth us from all sin."

In celebrating this holy ordinance, we are not only more closely cementing the ties of nature and the bands of friendship among ourselves, but we are extending our communion to the church of Christ universal, in the east and west, in the south and north; we are stretching out the right hand of fellowship over continents, over oceans, to give the salutation of brotherly-love to all who love our Lord Jesus; and to invite men of all colours and of all languages, to cast in their lot among us, and to take shelter with us under the shadow of this "great rock in a weary land," to repose with us amidst "the trees of life," whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations."

But is not "our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?" Is it not then, with them who are drinking new wine in our Father's kingdom; with the spirits of just men made perfect; with those whom on earth we loved; with those who have often eaten and drank with us at this table, and with whom we hope to eat and to drink at the table that is above, sitting down with them, and "with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven?" Delightful reflection! The employments of earth and hea-



ven are the same ; the animating principle, the spirit of love is the same ; the subject of their praise and the source of their joy are the same. “ Unto Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead and the Prince of the kings of the earth : Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen

The solemnity concludes with an intimation of Christ's second appearance. “ As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” “ Why trouble ye the woman ?” said Christ to the indigent disciples, who grudged the waste of the ointment which she poured on his feet, “ for she hath wrought a good work upon me ; for in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.” Her pious act embalmed the body for the grave : Ours contemplates Jesus, and the resurrection ; ours looks forward to the day when “ the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” “ Yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” “ He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come, quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XVI.

*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants whatsoever he saith unto you do it. And here were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a piece. Jesus saith unto them, fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine: and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.—JOHN xi. 1.—11.*

**I**T requires no common degree of wisdom to make the transition from various situations one to another, with dignity and propriety. The gravity and serious-



ness of deportment that suits the temple do not suddenly melt away into the familiarity and ease of private life. Men are called to act various parts, but often lack the skill to discriminate between character and character. At other times the scene changes too rapidly, and the habit of the public personage is scarcely laid aside, when the spirit of it is likewise shifted, and the man discovers that he is merely an actor. Difference of behaviour may undoubtedly be assumed with change of place and of company, without incurring the imputation of hypocrisy : but there is a radical character which the honest man never lays aside, whatever be the season, whatever the situation. He cannot indeed be gay and serious at the same moment : but in the house of mourning he may be sad without sinking into depression, and in the house of feasting he may be cheerful without rising into levity. He can “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,” without losing the firmness of his mind, or betraying inconsistency of spirit and temper. In truth, if you would be useful to men, you must accommodate yourself, where the rights of conscience do not interfere, to their circumstances, and to the laws of decency and prudence.

But where, alas ! shall we find the man who is continually on his guard, who in every situation possesses his soul, and governs his spirit, and keeps the door of his lips ? In vain we look for such a one among men of like passions with ourselves. But it is not for want of a perfect pattern, in the person of him who in all places, at all seasons, and in every situation, approved himself the Son of God and the friend of men. Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus. He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. Blessed lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

We have attended the great Teacher sent from God to the synagogue at Nazareth, and have heard him



fulfilling the duties of that gracious office, by reading and opening up the Scriptures, and thus producing one species of evidence to the truth of his divine mission, the accomplishment of ancient, well known, and acknowledged prophecies concerning himself, his person, his consecration to the great work which he should come to execute, and the wonderful success with which it should be crowned. We have seen him with complacency receiving his disciples on their return from a progress of preaching and healing, and of casting out devils ; and rejoicing in spirit, as he contemplated the sudden and utter destruction of Satan's kingdom, and on its ruins, the universal and everlasting establishment of his own. We are now to behold him exhibiting a different kind of evidence, but calculated to produce the same effect, that is, a full conviction that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, namely, the display of miraculous powers, to support the truth of the doctrines which he taught. This "Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews," felt and admitted. "Rabbi," says he, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." As on the two great commandments, love to God and love to man, "hang all the law and the prophets," so on these two unmoveable pillars, rest the whole fabric of christianity. The fulfilling of prediction, is a demonstration of the foreknowledge of Deity, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure ;" and of his truth and faithfulness in bringing it to pass, to an iota, to a tittle : and the working of miracles evinces the presence and concurrence of almighty power, which is able to support and to suspend, to control and alter the laws of nature, by a word, by an "I will." If the spirit and native tendency of the gospel be taken into the account, we shall



find it to possess every character of divinity that the heart of man could desire, or reason demand, or imagination figure.

The period, and the place, and the occasion of Christ's first public miracle, are all specified. It was *the third day* after the noted conversation that passed between Christ and Nathanael, which is recorded in the conclusion of the preceding chapter. There Jesus gave proof, not merely of superior sagacity, but of a knowledge that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nathanael, with all his guileless integrity, laboured under the common prejudice of the day, and had the vulgar proverb in his mouth, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He soon received conviction that there could, and that too the best of all things; for while he was yet speaking to Philip, Christ himself drew nigh to meet them, and instantly, in the hearing of Nathanael, pronounced a character of him which the searcher of hearts only could have unfolded: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael, justly conscious of inward rectitude, finds himself at once reprov'd and detected. His sarcasm respecting Nazareth not retorted, but disarm'd by receiving in return the honourable appellation of "an Israelite indeed," was a keen reproof to an ingenuous mind; and to find himself minutely known to a stranger, must have inspired high respect for that stranger, not unmixed with awe. With astonishment he exclaims, "Whence knowest thou me?" The answer completely displays the character of the Nazarene: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Here is an eye which at once penetrates into the heart, and marks minute, external contingent circumstances, even to the species of plant under the shadow of which Nathanael, at a certain moment, happened to repose. The "Israelite indeed" now resigns his prejudices and dismisses his doubts; wonder changes into veneration, "Nathanael



answered, and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel ;” and thus another respectable disciple is added to the school of Christ.

Let not this be considered as foreign to the subject of the present lecture. Nathanael was, of course, one of the invited guests to celebrate the marriage at Cana of Galilee. He was there, within three days, to behold another species of demonstration of his master’s divinity, that he might bear witness to it. And it was fit that a man so candid and upright should be furnished with every kind of evidence, which could remove prejudice or subdue infidelity. He is not indeed hereafter mentioned in the gospel history, but it seems highly probable that a person of his description, was speedily called to take an active part in propagating the truth as it is in Jesus. Some commentators have supposed him to be the same with Bartholomew, one of the twelve.

The *place*, where the miracle exhibited the glory of the Redeemer, was “Cana of Galilee,” perhaps to distinguish it from another city of that name in Celosyria, mentioned by Josephus in his Jewish antiquities. It was situated in that part of the Holy Land, which in the partition under Joshua, fell by lot to the tribe of Asher ; and stood on a river of the same name, which flowed through part of the inheritance of the tribe of Ephraim, into the Great Sea. It was hitherto a mere name, or a speck which might casually catch the eye as it wandered over the map of Palestine ; but Cana now acquired a celebrity which makes her to rank with the proudest of capitols, from an event which will transmit her name to the latest posterity.

The *occasion* was a marriage solemnity. It is an institution of heaven nearly as old as the creation : it was first celebrated in Paradise : God himself formed the union, presided over and witnessed the contract,



and pronounced the nuptial benediction. This stamps a purity, a dignity, a permanency on the ordinance, which man is bound highly to respect. The great interpreter and restorer of the law, accordingly, puts honour upon the institution by his presence and countenance, and by contributing to the comfort of the assembly convened on this happy occasion, by the charms of his conversation, and by a seasonable supply of one ingredient in a feast : and he afterwards vindicated the primitive sanctity of marriage from the irregularity and impurity which the hardness of the human heart had constrained even a Moses to permit, at least to connive at. “ Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female ; and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and they twain shall be one flesh ? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”

John the Baptist incurred the imputation of being possessed with a devil, because he was a man of more austere manners, and of a more sequestered mode of living ; because he “ came neither eating bread nor drinking wine.” His divine master, more gentle in deportment, more affable, accessible, and condescending, because he mixed with society, because he “ came eating and drinking,” is by the self-same persons represented as “ a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Where there is a disposition to censure, no purity nor prudence can escape. Nothing can please the peevish children in the market place. If their fellows excite them to dance by the sound of the pipe, they are disposed to look grave, and mourn : if their companions are in a serious mood, it is with them a time to dance. You cannot tell where to find them. It is not, at the same time, a mark of wisdom to brave the opinion of the world ; but wo be to that man whose conduct has no



better regulator than either popular opinion, or the decisions of a self-constituted censor. Christ has by example taught his disciples to seek, and to take opportunities of being useful, whatever construction may be put upon it by malignant observers.

“The mother of Jesus was there,” apparently, as one of the family, who took an interest in the credit of her relations, and to assist in attending to the comfort and accommodation of the guests; we find her watching over the expenditure of the provision, and devising the means of supply when it should fail. But Jesus and his disciples were among the persons specially invited. As the aim of the evangelist is simply to detail the circumstances relating to the miracle, every thing foreign to this is suppressed. This remark is applicable to the sacred writers in general. They present the leading object in its strongest features, leave it to make its native impression, and pass from it without exclaiming, without parade, without a commentary. On the other hand, where minuteness of description and enumeration is necessary, or of importance, all is examined with a microscopic eye, and beauties disclose themselves to closeness of investigation which the careless glance had overlooked.

Whether the company had proved more numerous than was expected, or whether a provision too scanty had been made, but in the middle of the banquet wine failed. Things which are in themselves, and as far as man is concerned, merely contingent, are pre-disposed and produced by a special interposition of divine Providence, to fulfil some valuable purpose. This little awkwardness of domestic arrangement furnished occasion for a grand display of almighty power. The deficiency was observed by the mother of Jesus, who communicated it to him as simply a remark of her own. But did not the communication partake of the nature of request, of expectation, of suggestion?



“They have no wine :” Is not this saying, can nothing be done to save the credit of the family ? They will suffer in the estimation of their friends, as too parsimonious at a season of festivity like the present. Canst thou find no supply ? There must, undoubtedly, have been something offensive in her meaning or mode of expression, for she meets with a reproof. And the mildest censure from such lips is a mark of displeasure. As to Nathanael before, so to Mary now he gives proof that he could read in the heart, what had not yet fallen from the tongue : “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee ? mine hour is not yet come.” “Woman :” we are not to estimate the spirit and import of this term of address by the refinement of our modern ideas and manners. A British female of very middling rank would consider herself as very highly insulted to be thus abruptly accosted by an equal, from an inferior it would be intolerable, and even in a superior it would be resented. But it was the appellation by which princes addressed themselves to ladies of the highest rank, and which even slaves employed in speaking to their mistresses, for it marks respect not familiarity. And we have a demonstration, in the present case, that it could imply nothing harsh or unkind, for it is Jesus who uses the word in speaking to his mother. On an occasion still more tender and interesting, when sovereign love was in its triumph, and dictated every expression ; when his cross was surrounded by some of the persons who witnessed the miracle of Cana of Galilee ; this conversation took place : “When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” Here was the dying effusion of filial affection : “Woman, behold thy son.”



“What have I to do with thee.” This is an air of severity, and probably was intended to check encroachment. There is a point beyond which parental authority itself must not presume to go. At the age of twelve, excess of maternal solicitude received a mild rebuke: “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” Nevertheless “he went down with them” from the temple, “and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” But to the man of thirty even a mother must not presume to dictate, or so much as insinuate. The words of the original have by some been differently translated; and Jesus is made to say, in reply to his mother’s observation, “they have no wine,” “What is that to me and thee?” What does it concern us whether there be wine or not? Such a question is little in the spirit of Christ, who took a condescending and an affectionate interest in all the infirmities and distresses incident to humanity, and to whom nothing could be indifferent which tended to promote the comfort of others; and the sequel plainly shews, that he actually cherished those kind affections, and expressed them in a manner peculiar to himself. It is more natural to adopt our common version, consistent as it is with the same sense of the phrase in a variety of other passages. “The devils coming out of the tombs exceeding fierce,” in the country of the Gergesenes, exclaim, “*What have we to do with thee*, Jesus, thou Son of God?” Meaning evidently; “We are afraid of thee; let us alone; we desire no acquaintance with thee; art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” The seventy interpreters translate the Hebrew idiom in the same phraseology and spirit, in a great many passages. Thus Jephthah addressed the king of Ammon, “What hast thou to do with me?” saying plainly, “I wish no intercourse; we can have nothing in common; Wherefore should we go to war together?” And thus, not to multiply instances, Da-



vid said to Abishai, when he proposed to go over and, in cold blood, to cut off Shimei's head, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeuriah?" "I like not your spirit; I want no such triumph; let God's will be done: you are taking his work out of his hand, and are deciding hastily when you ought to wait patiently.' This is entirely in the spirit of the passage before us. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" "Intrude not; prescribe not; I know what is fit for me to do; all my movements are already settled." In this view all is of a piece; all breathes the spirit of meekness; there is the majesty of Deity, and there is the united firmness and mildness of the man.

If there be any thing like sternness in the question, "What have I to do with thee?" it is sunk into the solemn asseveration concerning himself: "mine hour is not yet come." The hour of a man's birth, of his baptism, of his majority, of his marriage, of his death, is an epoch of singular importance both to himself and others. We measure time, we know its value, and we trifle with it. With an experience of its necessary lapse, and with the certain knowledge that no moment can be responsible for the debt of its predecessor, having enough to do with itself, the thoughtless sons of men will be drawing on a day which they are never to see, and they sport with borrowed property as if it were their own. The wise man, in the face of this reckoning of folly and madness, states the just account of the expenditure and use of time: "There is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." But we look up to Him who is wiser than the wisest, that we may learn to measure time, to understand the value of a day, and to improve the flying hour, which is gone before we are sensible that it has come.

"Mine hour is not yet come." It is an expression applied to various events of Christ's life and ministry. When his unbelieving brethren urged him, by way of



defiance, to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, and there make an open display of his miraculous powers, this was his reply: "My time is not yet come—Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come;" intimating that all his movements and operations were regulated to a moment, and therefore could neither be hurried forward nor retarded. When he did go up to Jerusalem, and taught openly in the temple, though his plainness and fidelity gave much offence, it is remarked that "no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come:" that is, the hour of his apprehension, trial and condemnation. When the devout Greeks who had come to worship in the temple, desired an interview with him, Jesus said to his disciples; "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified;" meaning the dawn of the gospel day upon the Gentile world. But while he rejoiced in spirit, as he contemplated that auspicious hour, he saw it leading to another and a darker hour, the hour of suffering and death. The prospect spreads a transient cloud over the serenity of his mind, and he said: "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Thus far the man of sinless infirmity. But the cloud passes away, serenity is restored and the hour of sorrow is lost in contemplating the glory that should follow, the accomplishment of his heavenly Father's purpose of mercy in the redemption of a lost world: "but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." When his "time was full come" that he should glorify God by his death, with heavenly composure "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Thus every step of the Redeemer's progress was weighed, measured, established by an antecedent counsel incapable of being overthrown or of failing.

His mother, though reprov'd, is not wholly discou-



raged. She perceives that whatsoever he did must be done at his own time and in his own way, and therefore enjoins the servants carefully to attend to whatever he should say unto them.

The ablutions, at this period, practised among the Jews, were carried to an absurd and superstitious excess. The law had indeed prescribed certain washings, which nature herself points out as conducive to health, cleanliness and comfort ; but tradition had multiplied these without end ; they had acquired an authority paramount to that of law, and the primary duties of life were sunk in an affected attention to external purity. "The Pharisees," says St. Mark, "and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." This drew upon them a severe censure from the lips of Jesus Christ. He charges them with the vilest hypocrisy, in "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." "For," says he, "laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups : and many other such like things ye do." "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." He then produces as an instance, their open and avowed violation of the fifth precept of the decalogue, engraven by nature on the heart of man, and proclaimed from Sinai by the mouth of God. The unnatural child had but by a vow to devote his substance to a pretendedly sacred purpose, in order to be for ever released from all obligation to assist aged or decayed parents. Thus a punctilious attention to washing the body, could be reconciled to a deliberate purpose of hardening the heart. These copious and frequent ablutions, account for the large provision of water made for the marriage feast. "There



were set six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three furlings apiece." To pretend to ascertain the quantity, by the names of ancient measurement, would be nugatory and absurd. If the thing could be done, what profit would arise from it? Is it not well known that all the wisdom of the British legislature, though frequently exerted, has hitherto been unable to establish a standard of weights and measures for the southern division of this little island? The precise quantity is left in intentional obscurity, by the use of the indefinite expression *two or three*, it is sufficient for us to know that the supply was very considerable. The expenditure of water, at this advanced period of the feast, must have been great. Jesus determined to make those partially exhausted vessels the medium of his intended miracle. To have replenished the empty wine vessels might excite suspicion of collusion; but into water-cisterns for purifying, wine never entered, and therefore no doubt could arise. He, then, who could have transformed the bottom of a dry cistern into a fountain of water, or of wine, at his pleasure, commands the servants to "fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."

The miracle is already performed. By an unseen, unperceived energy; without a word spoken, without a gesture, by a simple act of the will, plain water is instantaneously converted into wine of the finest quality. What dignified simplicity! what unaffected majesty! A fact so very extraordinary is narrated with no more pomp of language than the most common process of nature. He now desires the attendants, hitherto the only witnesses of this wonderful change, to draw off some of the wine, and bear it to the governor of the feast, at the moment when the deficiency began to be felt. Thus every supply which comes immediately from the hand of Providence is at once seasonable, salutary, and excellent in its kind. What



comes through the channel of men like ourselves must of necessity have a mixture of their impurity and imperfection.

With us the master of the house is also the governor of the feast. It is his concern to see that his friends be properly accommodated and supplied. But among the Jews an officer of this description was appointed to preside, whether elected by the company, named by the bridegroom, or constituted by public authority, whose business it was to pronounce a benediction on what was provided, and who, when the cup was blessed, first drank of it himself, and then passed it round the table. In compliance with this custom, Jesus directed the first-fruits of this miracle to be carried to him to pass judgment. He instantly perceives the difference, though ignorant of the process; and in surprise addresses himself to the bridegroom, whose it was to prepare the entertainment, and to defray the expense, in these words: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Though this too may not perfectly coincide with modern manners, it exhibits a picture of the common practice in that country and in that age; and it led to a discovery of the whole mystery, and Jesus stood confessed the Son of God, the Lord of universal nature, the searcher of hearts, the ruler of elements, the friend and brother of mankind. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

Many and useful are the practical reflections which flow from this subject. Permit me to suggest some of them.

1. The religion of Jesus Christ embraces the whole circle of duty. Duties are of various orders and importance. Some are essential and indispensable, others are agreeable and ornamental; as in a well-constructed



edifice there are parts absolutely necessary to its existence, and there are parts which might be removed indeed without affecting the solidity and durableness of the fabric, but the removal would greatly impair its elegance and beauty. So in the scale of morals there are the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; and there are obligations of an inferiour order; though highly important in the commerce of human life; such as gentleness, courtesy, affability, sympathy. Of both ranks of duty our blessed Lord set the happiest example. He mixed with mankind, he partook of their griefs and their joys, he sat down at their tables, he assisted at their nuptial festivity, he indulged in the mutual endearments of friendship, he paid attention to little children, took them to his arms and blessed them. Disciple of Jesus, go thou and do likewise. Ill does it become thee to be stately, and distant, and reserved and ungracious, when he was so meek and condescending. There are certain austere christians who will on no occasion, and on no account, descend from the pinnacle of their dignity, and who render religion disgusting to others by the harshness of their manners, and a severe, morose, ungainly deportment. This they cannot have learned of Christ, nor at his old school. Will they vouchsafe to take a lesson from the apostle Paul, who undertood his own real dignity as well as any man? "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." And I beg leave to add, from him: "Be not wise in your own conceits."

2. Jesus himself was all purity and perfection, but the mother of Jesus was subject to culpable infirmity. She incurred censure oftener than once, and therefore is not to be looked up to as a perfect model, much less to receive the adoration which is due to deity alone. It is one of the most humiliating views of human understanding, to behold it so far degraded as to think of approaching the great intercessor and friend of mankind through the intercession of another. "There is one



God," saith the Scripture, and one "Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." No, says popery, you must have a mediatrix between you and that mediator; nay, one armed with authority to control and command him. The mind turns away with horror from the blasphemous suggestion. The rights of parents have a boundary, both as to extent and duration, the authority of God knows no limit, and never can expire. When his voice is heard, that of nature must be suppressed. The duties of the public character must absorb the feelings of the private individual. We may warrantably lay before our compassionate Redeemer, our most secret thoughts, and pour out our hearts before him in prayer and supplication, in perfect submission to his will; but we must not presume either to prescribe to his providence, or to arraign his conduct. He doeth all things wisely and well.

3. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for "it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Whether therefore God supplies the good things of life in the ordinary course of nature, or by a special interposition of his almighty power, they are liberally bestowed, they are the bounty of a Father, to be used, to be enjoyed. When God placed our grand progenitor in the terrestrial paradise, the parental grant was large: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat;" but with one single reservation; "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We are still on the same footing, in a world which has indeed ceased to be a paradise, but which, nevertheless, is still abundantly stored with every thing necessary, convenient, and comfortable for man. The grant is still as liberal: "The good of the land is before you:" take, thou mayest freely eat, freely drink. But, mark the reservation, still indispensable as ever, eat, drink, in moderation, to the support and refreshment of the body,



not its depression and derangement. To a certain bound this is cordial, salutary, nutritive: beyond its nature changes, it becomes a deadly poison. Satisfy thyself with knowing its good, and venture not to make trial of its evil. Did Jesus convert water into wine that he might minister fuel to excess? The thought is impious. As well might a bountiful providence be charged with the gluttony, the drunkenness and all the other sensual lusts in which men indulge themselves, because it "gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." The miracle of Cana of Galilee, as all those which our Lord wrought, was a miracle of goodness; it provided a supply of a necessary of life, to a family in moderate circumstances, and which lasted them, I doubt not, for many days: it was the repayment of a debt of friendship and hospitality in a manner peculiar to himself; and it was a manifestation of his glory in the eyes of his disciples, who had far other thoughts than that of abasing their master's bounty; "they believed on him."

4. We have said that this and all our Saviour's other miracles were miracles of goodness: We now add, They were all disinterested. Here he gave proof of sovereignty uncontrollable. It was exercised to supply the temporal wants of a few, and to minister to the everlasting consolation of myriads. But "Christ pleased not himself." What might not his power have commanded, of all that is exquisite on the earth, in the air, through the paths of the sea? But though a hungred, he will not command stones to be made bread for his own use; if he miraculously multiply a few loaves and fishes, it is to feed a starving fainting multitude. If he makes the sea tributary, it is at one time to compensate the painful labour of poor men, who had "toiled all night and taken nothing," at another, to prevent offence by paying his tribute money. Fish broiled on a fire of coals, and a morsel of bread, are the simple fare on which he and his disciples dine, even "after that he was risen from the



dead." "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." "They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses;" His clothing was not worth dividing among a few of the basest of mankind: His raiment, his lodging, his fare were all of a piece. And is the servant greater than his Lord? To the poor the gospel is preached, and to the poor the example is set, the example of contentment with a low condition, of meek submission to hardship, of superiority to the vanities and luxuries of this world, of self-government and self-denial. His modern disciples have been accused of love of ease and indulgence, of fondness for dainties and delicacies, of aiming at power and pre-eminence. If the imputation be just, it is to be lamented: and christians of every rank and denomination are concerned, as far as in them lies, to do it away. If it be ill-founded, it must be borne, as part of the reproach of Christ: and his disciple must bear in mind that he is bound by the law and by the practice of his divine master, not only to abstain from all evil, but from all *appearance* of evil.



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XVII.

*And he rose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house : and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever ; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever ; and it left her. And immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him ; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak : for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place ; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also ; for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.—*  
LUKE iv. 38—44.

**T**HE religion of the gospel is adapted to every possible condition of life, for it is adapted to the nature of man, who, with the variation of a few circumstances, is the same universally, and in every age. There is the difference of colour and speech, the difference of climate and soil, the difference of high and low, of rich and poor ; but still it is man, with all his excellencies and imperfections, with all his capability of degradation and



of improvement, with all his propensities to evil and to good. Christianity takes him up as he is, and undertakes to make him what he ought to be. "Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots?" No, replies nature, I give that colour, I painted those spots; but I cannot undo my own work. He that is black must, for me, continue black still, that which is spotted must be spotted still. But the grace of the gospel unfolds a mystery which it is beyond the reach of nature to solve. It transforms that which was as scarlet into the whiteness of snow, what was red like crimson into the colour of wool. "Can these dry bones live?" Yes, at the word, and by the spirit of the Lord. Miracles like these the Spirit of Christ is exhibiting every day. Do we not see: O that the spectacle were more common! Do we not see loftiness of station united to lowliness of mind; a hard lot to a contented spirit; the fulness of this world to the exceeding riches of the grace of God?

When the Son of God came for the salvation of a lost world, "verily he took not on him the nature of angels." But more wonderful still! he united the divine nature to the human, and thereby became at once an object of supreme adoration, and a familiar instructor. What he said and did as the Lord, "wise in heart and mighty in strength," we must ever contemplate at an awful distance, admiring, venerating what we cannot find out unto perfection, and which we are still more incapable of imitating. But in what he said and did as a man, we behold a pattern most amiably simple, most powerfully impressive, most consummately perfect. In vain do we look any where else for that steadiness and uniformity of character which alone can merit the distinction of being proposed as an example. Whom else can we with safety follow in every thing? In the most perfect of mere men, while there is much to respect and to commend, there is ever a something to blame and to



regret ; some fault of temper, some inconsiderateness of expression, some inconsistency of conduct. But in our divine master all is estimable, uniform and consistent. He presents one and the same character in solitude and in society, in the synagogue and in domestic retirement, at a marriage feast and before the tribunal ; displaying a native dignity undebased by an infusion of insolence, condescension pure from servility, fortitude without ferociousness, sensibility without affectation, the sublimity of devotion with the perfect ease of friendship.

In the last lecture we attended this friend of mankind to the celebration of a marriage solemnity, and beheld him partaking of the pure delights of friendly and domestic intercourse, mingling with his kindred and with the disciples whom he had chosen ; and while he miraculously ministered to their wants, as the great ruler and Lord of nature, we observe him, as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, sympathizing in their joys, adopting their solitudes, their wants and expectations, and joining in their conversation. Thus he tacitly and obliquely reprove that haughty reserve, that unbending stateliness, that ungracious distance from men which frequently attempts to pass for superior wisdom, sanctity and importance. We pretend not to arrange the several events of our Lord's history in the exact order of time. The evangelists display them in an energetic simplicity far beyond the reach of art. There is in the word of God, if it be lawful to say so, a majestic irregularity that transcends the control of rule ; just as the surface of our globe, with its mountains and valleys, its precipices and plains, its rivers and oceans, defies the application of the straight line and of the compasses ; and as the face of the starry heavens presents to the eye a magnificent assemblage of worlds scattered about by a hand that rejects all measurement by any standard but his own. Science indeed has contrived artificial combinations and ar-



rangements both of the heavenly bodies, and of Scripture truths, but their native glory and magnitude are not reducible to systems of human invention. It may be pleasant, and far from unprofitable, to ascertain dates, to unravel the chain; but it is surely of secondary moment. The actions and events themselves, and the evidence that they existed, are the great concern of the christian world; but above all, the practical influence of those great truths on the hearts, the consciences, and the lives of men.

Precluded from opportunities of being eminently useful at Nazareth, through the envy and unbelief of his townsmen, Jesus withdraws from that city, not in anger but in sorrow, though a most cruel, ungrateful and atrocious attempt upon his life had been made by its unworthy inhabitants; and he proceeds to prosecute his labours of love at Capernaum, a city situated on the sea of Galilee. From this place, it would appear, he was called to the adjacent town of Cana, to the celebration of the marriage; and that solemnity being ended, he returns to Capernaum accompanied by the disciples whom he had already chosen. Here we find this Teacher sent from God still indefatigably pursuing the great object of his mission, and still putting respect on the word and ordinances of God. Behold him devoting the day of sacred rest to useful purposes; employing the leisure and retirement from temporal concerns which it afforded, in executing the benevolent office of instructing the ignorant and guilty, in a way of life and salvation. We know, from the general strain of his public ministrations, and particularly from the portion of Scripture, which he rehearsed and applied in the synagogue at Nazareth, that the things written concerning himself constituted the great burden of his preaching: Scripture the source, Christ Jesus the subject, the sabbath the season, the synagogue the scene. "Never man spake like this man."



But the services of an earthly sanctuary must close. There is a season of retirement and repose as there is of labour and exertion. The duties of private friendship, of domestic devotion, the rights of hospitality, the care of the body, put in their several claims, which must be answered. Christ accordingly "arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house." The accommodation of a poor fisherman's hovel, on the shore of the lake of Gennessaret, could not be very elegant. The fare provided by a hard-working plebeian, doomed frequently to toil all night long without taking any thing, could not be very luxurious or delicate. But when a man gives you the shelter of his roof, however mean, and a place at his board, however homely, he does all that a prince can do; and the difference is a paltry circumstance or two, beneath the consideration of a rational being.

But the house of Peter was, at this time, not only the abode of penury, but likewise the house of mourning, for "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever." The sabbath had not been to her a day of rest, but of agitation and pain; and the distress of a sick bed might probably be aggravated by reflecting on absence from the house of prayer, and from the comforts of the public worship of God. The value and importance of objects vary strangely, in our estimation, as they are viewed through the medium of health or sickness, of pain or ease. The illusion of the world disappears, when the fever in the blood forms in the distempered imagination, whirling orbs of perturbation, and perplexity, and despair; or when, in cold blood, conscience darts an anxious look into the world of spirits. Very different is the aspect of the sabbath in the eye, and the hour, of thoughtless dissipation, and when the son of dissipation is stretched on a bed of languishing. Then he "snuffed at it, and said, Behold, what a weariness is it? When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the



sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" But how very different are the reflections of "the days of darkness," of the "months of vanity," of the "wearisome nights," appointed, when the sleepless patient is constrained to cry out, "When shall I arise and the night be gone." "What fruit had I then in those things, whereof I am now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."

The visit of Jesus to Peter's family had more than one object in view. The friend of man retired to converse with men, the master to instruct his disciples, the poor to feed with the poor, the weary to repose with the weary. The Son of God entered into the house to manifest his glory, to display his power, to exercise his benevolence in the miraculous relief of distress. Thus amply does he repay every token of affection bestowed on himself, or on one of the least of his brethren. Distress awakens sympathy. The children of the family cannot think of sitting down to eat bread, while the mother of it lay in extremity. Filial tenderness had undoubtedly exerted itself to the uttermost. The poor scribe of the Galilean had, perhaps, been drained in purchasing medicine and cordial for his afflicted mother-in-law: though this be none of the least of the evils which attend poverty, to behold the person whom we love perish for want of advice and medicine, for want of a cordial beyond the reach of our means. As a last resource they lay her case before Jesus: "and they besought him for her." Did he need to be importuned? Was he difficult of access? Did his goodness flow reluctantly? No, but the intercourse between heaven and earth, between the Creator and the creature is the confidence, the prayer of distress meeting the benignity, the unremitting attention of the Father of mercies, who will be sought unto, that he may shew himself gracious.

"And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her." The miracle of turning water into



wine was effected by a simple act of the will, without either gesture or speech, and the evidence of it rested, in part, on the testimony of the servants who had filled the pots with water. Here we have both gesture and speech, and the immediate and personal conviction of all who were in the house. In nothing is the sovereignty of Deity more conspicuously displayed than in the *manner* of his acting. It is so unlike human conjecture, that the pride of man is apt to be offended that Providence did not observe the mode which his sagacity had prescribed. Naaman the Syrian had settled, in his own mind, the whole process of the cure of his own leprosy. "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Not one iota of his conjecture was realized. The prophet did not come out, nor assume the supposed attitude, nor pronounce the supposed invocation, but "sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times:" and pride is hurrying him away in a rage, to think that the rivers of Damascus should be preferred to the waters of Israel. Thus while prophecy has been successively fulfilling, the event so ill accorded with prevailing opinion and expectation, that while the prediction was admitted, the accomplishment, however coincident and exact, has been rejected.

This divine sovereignty our blessed Lord exercises in performing all his mighty works. He *wills* water into wine. Now he rebukes the disease, and now speaks to the patient. He heals the feverous son of the nobleman, at the distance of Cana from Capernaum, and the feverous mother of Simon's wife standing by her bed side. He anoints the blind man's eyes with clay, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam; he cries with a loud voice over the grave of his departed friend, "Lazarus, come forth." All demonstrates the underived and independent, as well



as the almighty power of God, whose will is the sole and the supreme law, as to the time, the manner and the matter of the work.

There is a wonderful vivacity in the unaffected conciseness and simplicity of the narration. He stood, he spake, he prevailed. "He rebuked the fever." Disease is here personified, as susceptible of reprehension, and of voluntary subjection to authority, "and it left her," as one who has encroached and intruded, and who feels and acknowledges the power of a superiour repelling and casting him out.

The transitions of nature are gradual, slow, imperceptible in their progress. When the ocean is roused into fury by the raging wind, it continues in a state of agitation long after the tempest has ceased to roar; but when Christ speaks the word, the effect is instantaneous and complete. "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." When the fever has spent its force, and the crisis of convalescence has taken place, it leaves the patient feeble and languid, and it frequently requires a considerable length of time to restore both the body and the mind to the full exercise of their several functions; but when Jesus rebukes the fever, it not only in a moment departs, but the sufferer is at the same moment made perfectly whole: "And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them." As in creation so in Providence, He speaks and it is done, He gives commandment and it stands fast. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect."

The circumstance of her *ministering* to her physician and the family, is striking and instructive. It teaches us the proper use of prolonged life, of restored faculties. They are to be devoted to the honour of God, and to the service of our fellow creatures. They were deeply affected by her danger, they looked in anxious expectation to the return of her health, and



they besought the Lord for it ; she employs that precious gift in contributing her best endeavours to promote their ease and comfort. What debt is so sacred as that of gratitude ? and what benefactor has laid us under so many and such unspeakable obligations as He who gave us life, and who sustains it, as He who died to redeem us ? We have here a beautiful and interesting view of human life. Every relation has its corresponding sphere of duty. The happiness of domestic society consists not in the interchange of great benefits, on signal occasions, but in the hourly reciprocation of the little offices of love, in kind looks, in kind affections, in mutual forbearance and forgiveness, in the balm of sympathy whether we sorrow or rejoice ; in a word, according to the apostolic injunction, in being of the same mind one towards another.

The religion of the Gospel wears an aspect peculiarly favourable to families. The infancy and childhood of Jesus Christ were passed in the bosom of his family. His first public miracle was performed in putting honour upon a family party, at Cana of Galilee. He made one in the family of Simon, at Capernaum. The house of Lazarus and his sisters at Bethany, he made his home, and there he cultivated all the endearing charities of exalted friendship. To find a home for his mother was his last earthly care ; and, as the head of his own family, he presided at the Paschal solemnity, and instituted the memorial of his dying love. Thus are domestic relations strengthened, sweetened, sanctified, ennobled. A christian kingdom or state never existed. But a family of christians, all of one heart and of one soul, we trust, is not a rarity. And to christianize families is the direct road to the christianizing of nations. In the contracted sphere of a family, however numerous, every one knows every one ; every one cares for every one. The master's influence is felt and acknowledged by all. A common interest, both temporal, and eternal, unites



the individuals to each other, and heaven descends to dwell with men upon earth. So propitious is christianity to the dearest and best interests of civil society.

The scene which we have been reviewing passed on the evening of the sabbath. Nor could the sanctity of the day be profaned by a work of mercy, or by the pious and friendly intercourse of kindred spirits, whose religion was seated in the heart, not chilled into lifeless forms. But the superstitious observance of the sabbath operated powerfully on the multitude. Though prompted by natural affection to apply for relief to their afflicted friends, they defer it till the going down of the sun, that is, till the sabbath was over; for they had yet to learn “what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice;” and “the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day;” and “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” “Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him.” A sense of the weakness of those good people is lost in respect for their humanity. They are not chidden away from Peter’s door as unseasonable intruders; they are not referred to another day. It is the cry of misery entering into the ear of mercy, and it cries not in vain: “and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.” Here the mode of cure is the imposition of hands. Even so, blessed Jesus, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Let me be the subject of thy miraculous grace, and convey thou the healing power through whatsoever channel thou wilt.

The service of the synagogue, in the morning of the sabbath, had been disturbed by a wretched demoniac, who “cried with a loud voice, saying, let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the holy One of God.” Jesus, by a word, dispossessed the impure spirit, and restored the



unhappy man to himself, in the presence of the whole assembly, who were justly filled with astonishment at such a display of power and goodness. It is affecting to think that this dreadful species of malady was far from being uncommon at that period ; for we find the fame of the morning's miracle spread abroad, and it attracts to the place where Jesus was, in the evening, many persons in the same deplorable condition. One of the depths of Satan, in these cases, was to pay affected homage to Jesus of Nazareth, in the view of infusing a suspicion that there might be a secret combination and conclusion between him and them, and of thereby diminishing his dignity and authority in the eyes of the people. To be praised by the wicked, is offensive and dishonourable to the good ; and the adversary is never more dangerous than when he "is transformed into an angel of light." But when the prince of this world came, he found nothing in Christ ; no weak part to attack, no foundation whereon to erect his engines : but wisdom ever prepared to meet cunning, purity to resist every evil suggestion, and authority to silence the tempter whenever his encroachment became too daring. He disdained the testimony of a demon in his favour, and rejected the insidious praise of an enemy. "And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak : for they knew that he was Christ : " that is, he permitted them not to declare, though they spake the truth, that they knew him to be the Christ.

Having thus fulfilled the public duties of the sanctuary, and the more private offices of friendship ; having employed the greater part of the night in receiving and relieving the numerous objects who came, or who were brought to him, he withdrew, toward the dawning of the day, into a still closer retirement, and, for a season, shut the world entirely out. "And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place." Sacred were those hours of solitude to heavenly meditation, to devotional intercourse with Him



that sent Him, whose glory he ever sought, and whose will it was his delight to execute. "Ye shall leave me alone;" says he to his disciples, "and yet," adds he, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." When some great arrangement is to be made toward the establishment and extension of his kingdom, preparation for it passes in solemn abstraction from all sublunary things. Thus his own public ministry was preceded by a forty days retreat into the wilderness." "And it came to pass in those days," when he was about to consecrate the twelve to the office of apostleship, "that he went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God;" thus also was the glorious scene of his transfiguration introduced; and thus he exemplified the practice which he so powerfully recommends to his disciples: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

The admiring and delighted multitude trace him into his place of retirement, and sensible of the value of such a visit, they entreat him to prolong it. Various motives might suggest this request. In some, it might be the attraction of novelty, in others the love of the truth: here the sense of gratitude for benefits received, there the principle of curiosity gaping after a farther display of wonders. In one it might be the full conviction of an honest and enlightened mind, and in another a malignant disposition to discover a blemish. We know from the sequel, that the success of our Lord's miracles and preaching at Capernaum, was wofully similar to what it had been at Nazareth, for this is the dismal account which he himself gives of it, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day.



But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Whatever were their motives for wishing his longer continuance among them, they are for the present resisted, and a reason is assigned. "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." Every word here is significant and powerful. "I *must* preach." What imposed the necessity? The commission which he had undertaken to execute; his own sovereign will and pleasure; his own unerring understanding: his own unbounded benevolence; the extensive demands of perishing humanity. "I must preach *the kingdom of God*:" its descent to earth, its adaptation to the nature and condition of ignorant and guilty men; its divine object, to raise fallen man from earth, from hell, to heaven; its present operation and effect, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" its stability, "a kingdom that cannot be moved;" the sovereign grace which confers it, "fear not little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Such was the glorious subject of Christ's preaching; a subject compared to which the pursuits of avarice, of ambition, and the pride of kings are less than nothing and vanity: a subject that interests not Nazareth, and Capernaum, and the cities of Galilee only, where it was first proclaimed, but the men, the cities, the nations of all ages and generations. On such a narrow and seemingly slender foundation, what a fabric has arisen? "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes." Let the great object of Christ's mission direct and control our pursuit of every object. He was *sent* to bring men under the dominion of the kingdom of God; and he has taught us when we pray to say: "Thy kingdom come." If we enter into the spirit of that petition, it will be our concern that the empire of sin and Satan in our own hearts be completely sub-



verted ; that peace on earth, and good will among men be promoted ; that the kingdoms of this world, become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and that he may reign for ever and ever.

Let us review this portion of our blessed Lord's history, and reflect :

1. The duties of religion, then, and those of ordinary life are intimately united and interwoven ; they are perfectly consistent, and yield mutual support. The service of the sanctuary must not be unnecessarily protracted, to the wearying of the flesh, and to become an encroachment on the just, prudent or necessary concerns of the family, and no domestic regards must preclude works of charity and mercy, even to strangers. On the other hand, no attention to civil and domestic affairs, except in cases of urgent necessity, and no works of mercy must plead a dispensation for the non-observance of the ordinance of God. Under the governance of a well regulated spirit, daily lawful employments become not only a reasonable but a religious service, and the functions necessary to the support of mere animal life, may be performed to the glory of God. And neither the public offices of the temple, nor family order and devotion must be alleged as an exemption from the obligations of private and personal religion. Indeed all must begin here. For families are composed of individuals, and the churches of Christ of families. To the perfect health of the natural body, the soundness of every member is essential : a perfection, however, rarely to be found, and seldom of long continuance. But the present feebleness, imperfection and disorder of the particular members of that body whereof Christ is the head, are relieved by the prospect of " the perfecting of the saints, of the edifying of the body of Christ," when " we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."



2. Can the father of lies speak truth? Yes, when it promises to answer his purpose; and truth itself partakes of the nature of a lie, when it is employed for the purpose of deception. Do devils believe? Yes, to their sorrow; "they believe and tremble." Does Satan give a just testimony to the Son of God? Yes, in hope of bringing it into discredit. Let no one, then, value himself on the mere truth and soundness of his principles, on the exact orthodoxy of his faith. A principle, however excellent, that remains inactive, is of no value, like a mathematical proposition, demonstrably certain, but applied to no use; or a wholesome stream frozen up and stagnating at the very source. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith: Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

3. Who has not known disease, and danger, and manifold affliction? And who has not experienced frequent and merciful deliverance? The distress came from an unseen hand, and so did the relief. The agent, the instrument was human, was sensible. It was the skill of the physician, it was the power of medicine, it was the sympathy of friendship. But who taught the physician to comprehend my malady, and to reach it? Who gave virtue to the prescribed medicine? Who excited compassion in the bosom of my friend? He who rebuked the fever, and it fled; he who laid his hands on the sick, and they were made whole; he who took the dead daughter of the ruler of the synagogue by the hand, and said, "Damsel arise;" and "straightway she arose and walked." Whether, therefore, health remain unimpaired, or be restored, by natural or extraordinary means; whether deliverance came immediately from God, or be wrought



through the instrumentality of second causes, the hand of Deity is equally to be acknowledged ; and prolonged life, and renewed strength are to be devoted to Him who “ giveth to all life and breath, and all things ; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

*And the Jews' passover was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandize. And his disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.—JOHN xi. 13—17.*

**B**ESIDES the usual, universal and fixed measurements of time, all men have a particular and personal standard of calculation and reference, namely, certain incidents of their own lives, to themselves inexpressibly momentous, however uninteresting to the rest of mankind. Thus a mother, with much accuracy and distinctness, refers every other event, of whatever magnitude and importance, to the respective dates of the birth of her children. The expiration of his *time*, as it is called, that is of his clerkship, or apprenticeship, forms an important epoch in the existence of a young man; and the fate of princes, and the revolutions of empire acquire in his eyes, a peculiar consequence from their relation, in point of time, to that grand revolution in his own little state. The consecration of prelates, and the inauguration of kings



are, at once, public and private measures of duration. Every act of the state is dated by the year of the sovereign's reign. But human life admits not of a repetition of those more distinguished periods. They are remembered and referred to because they are rare. Were every day to exhibit a state-trial, hardly any, except the parties and their connections, would care to attend it, or think of setting a mark upon it.

There is one life, however, of which every hour is an epoch, of which every act is decisive, of which every event is highly and universally interesting, and of which every period is a "fulness of time." Of this life each instant, each incident, every progressive step, furnishes a theme for the tongues, for the pens of thousands of thousands of men and angels, and, when their stores are exhausted, it presents a subject as new, as important, as unbounded as it was at the beginning. The beloved disciple, having thrown his mite of information into the public treasury, concludes his gospel with declaring his belief, his deliberate conviction that the history of the life and actions of his divine master was a subject infinite and inexhaustible. "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written ;" meaning undoubtedly, that the things which Jesus said and did were so many, so extraordinary, so significant, so efficient, as infinitely to exceed human comprehension and belief. But wherefore should the expression of the evangelist be considered as hyperbolical, when we are told that these are the "things which the angels desire to look into ;" and when we reflect on the burthen of the eternal song of the redeemed, in heaven, "I heard," says John, "the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands : saying with a loud voice,



worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

From the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Jesus again "went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days." How those days were employed we have seen in the preceding lecture: in conducting the service of the synagogue, in cultivating the charities of private life, in secret devotion, in healing the sick, in casting out devils, in preaching the kingdom of God. Having made a progress of teaching and preaching over the cities and synagogues of Galilee, He now, for the first time since he assumed a public character, went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of passover. Preserving the order of events as accurately as an attentive comparison of evangelist with evangelist enables us, we are now to contemplate an incident in our Lord's history marked with very peculiar features, and presenting a new and instructive opening into his character, namely, his purgation of the temple from the impurities with which it was profaned by an impious and infamous traffic.

From his earliest years the commanded solemnities of that sacred place were punctually observed. Whatever the law enjoined was to his infant state duly performed. While under parental authority, particularly when it led to the house and worship of God, he respectfully submitted to it. In the maturity of age, voluntary and cheerful obedience to the ordinances of heaven distinguished the great exemplar of decency and order. Through the goodness of God, we are delivered from all burdensome and costly attendance on



the service of the temple. We are not called to wait upon God with rams and calves of a year old. Our husbandmen, manufacturers and merchants are not summoned, under severe penalties, several times in the year, to join in the worship of the metropolitan church, at a great expense of time and substance. Is therefore the service of the christian sanctuary worthless and contemptible? Do we therefore requite the Lord of the sabbath with neglect and ingratitude? Do we therefore snuff at his bloodless sacrifices, and say, "Behold, what a weariness is it? and bring that which is torn, and the lame, and the sick for an offering?" Dare christian parents set the example to their children and dependants of irreligion and profanity, and, because they are set free from a costly ceremonial, and a superstitious observance of the sabbath, will they claim and assume an exemption from the offices and the spirit of piety, devotion and gratitude? Liberated from an intolerable yoke of iron, disdain they to wear the honourable, the golden chains of love?

The Jewish ritual was at this period vilely profaned, and was rapidly hastening to dissolution. But so long as it is in force, our blessed Lord condescends to be the pattern of attention and respect to it. And yet, What a scene did the house of God then present! The forms of religion remained, but the power and glory had departed. The letter of the law was still held in affected veneration, but the spirit was completely evaporated. The sacrifices of the living and true God were shamefully prostituted to gratify the most sordid of human passions, godliness was perverted into a mere instrument of filthy lucre, and the house of prayer was degraded into a den of thieves. And such is the fearful progress of moral corruption. Ferver gradually subsides into lukewarmness, and lukewarmness into cold. Indifference soon becomes mere formality, and formality is but a step from total neglect. Neglect degenerates into hatred and aversion.



and an unhallowed zeal at length attempts to destroy what a zeal according to godliness once endeavoured to build up. What can be more opposite and unlike than devout worshippers engaged in a holy contention of gratitude, praise and love, striving who should present the most acceptable sacrifice to the Father of spirits : and carnal, worldly-minded formalists trying to over-reach one another ; the one eager to purchase the ox or the sheep for his offering at as cheap a rate as possible, and the other to sell it at the highest price. And the very court of the temple is made the open theatre of this abominable commerce.

Before thou liftest up thy hand, O man, to scourge out those impious, sordid, profane Jews, pause, and look into thine own heart. Is no unholy traffic going on there ? Knowest thou not that thine own body is the temple of the living God ? Whose altar, then, is reared up in that sacred edifice of God's own building ; and what incense smokes upon it ? Say is the name of Mammon inscribed there ? Does sensuality there celebrate no nocturnal revels ? What shall the palace of the great King be transformed into " a cage of every unclean and hateful bird ! " Or, with the superstitious Athenian, art thou ignorantly bowing down before an " unknown God ? " Thou regularly observest the hour, and frequentest the house of prayer ; but is there no table of " the money-changer " lurking in some obscure corner ? Didst thou leave the world at the door on coming in ? Why wander these eyes abroad over thy neighbour's garb and appearance ? They ought to be fixed on " thy Father who is in secret," and who " seeth in secret." Dost thou too " offer the sacrifice of fools ? " Darest thou approach the altar of God, conscious that thou art not yet reconciled to thy brother ? The gift in thy hand is polluted ; presume not to offer it. " Leave it before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."



It was the court of the Gentile which this scandalous trade thus shamefully profaned, by the buying and selling of sheep, and oxen, and doves ; and by the exchange of foreign for current coin, and of money of a higher for that of a lower denomination. And thus not only was the worship of the great Jehovah debased and perverted, but the minds of decent and devout strangers, who “had come to Jerusalem for to worship,” must have been grievously shocked and scandalized, to the utter extinction of every serious and devotional impression. This it was which excited a holy and just indignation in the Son of God ; in beholding the temple violated, the sacrifices of God defiled, and a stumbling block laid in the way of proselytes, by men invested with a sacred character.

“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables ; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father’s house, a house of merchandize.” This discloses a new and singular exhibition of our blessed Lord’s spirit and temper. No personal injury or insult could provoke one expression of resentment. He “gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : he hid not his face from shame and spitting:” you have heard of the meekness of Moses, and of the patience of Job. But what are they to the patience, meekness and gentleness of Christ ? Nevertheless these gracious qualities have a boundary. There are occasions where the exercise of them would cease to be virtue, and where man would “do well to be angry.” Wanton deliberate profanation of the name, the day, the house of the Lord, is one of those occasions which justify severity. A commanding dignity, an irresistible glory must have occasionally beamed from the person of our Lord, which overawed and intimidated the beholder. How is it possible otherwise to account for



the quiet submission of those men to corporeal chastisement. They were many in number; they had a common interest to bind them to each other; they were in hitherto unquestioned possession of the ground; their property was concerned; they had the connivance at least, if not the permission of the higher powers. He was alone, unknown, unconnected, unsupported. But they cannot stand the lightning of his eye, his voice strikes horror into their guilty consciences. They presume not to reason or to resist, but tamely give up their gainful traffic abashed and confounded. Thus the multitude that came with Judas to take Jesus, though furnished "with lanterns, and torches, and weapons," were so overwhelmed by the majesty of his appearance, that "as soon as he had said unto them, *I am he*, they went backward and fell to the ground." And if such were the glory with which he sometimes invested himself, in his state of humiliation, what must be the glory of his second coming "with clouds," when "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him?"

What a severe reproof was this action of our Lord, of the carelessness and indifference of the high priest, and of the other ministers of religion? To them it belonged to guard the sanctity of the temple and of its worship. The dignity of their own station and character suffered, when the house of God was violated. Is it doing them injustice to suspect that they partook of the profits of this illicit trade? If this suspicion be well founded, the grossest enormity is immediately accounted for. When the love of money has once taken possession of the heart, no tie of religion and morality is binding. Conscience, sense of honour, sense of decency, sense of duty, all, all is sacrificed at the shrine of this insatiate demon, which never says "it is enough." At those seasons the demand for cattle to be offered in sacrifice must have been very great. Josephus, in his *Wars of the Jews*, informs us, that no



less than two hundred and fifty-six thousand and five hundred victims were presented at one passover. A small share of the gains upon such an extensive consumption, must therefore have amounted to a very large sum. What a confederacy, then, had the zeal and intrepidity of Christ to encounter ! a whole host of inhuman, unfeeling dealers in flesh, actuated by the basest and most unrelenting of human passions, and leagued with a time-serving priesthood who put every thing up to sale.

We have before us a striking and encouraging instance of the power and influence of one person of inflexible integrity, in a corrupted state of society. He may singly and successfully oppose a torrent of iniquity. Vice is timid when directly attacked. "The wicked flee," saith the wise man, "when no one pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Irresistible is the force of truth and conscience. "Is not my word like as fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?" "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This is the weapon which our Master wielded, together with the "scourge of small cords." Smitten at once in their persons and in their consciences, they retreat with shame from the field, acknowledging, feeling the superiority of real goodness. Thus then learn, O man, to arm thyself, and say, "the Lord God will help me : therefore shall I not be confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." From the inexhaustible store of Scripture draw thy resources for the warfare, and thou shalt find thyself invincible. What has he to fear, who is conscious of the goodness of his cause, who employs "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God," and who goes



forth conquering and to conquer in full confidence of divine conduct and support.

It is evident from the censure pronounced upon the violators of the temple, that their trade was every way unlawful. This transaction is recorded by all the four evangelists with little if any variation. And by comparing them together we shall find, that the abuse exposed and condemned was a horrid mixture of impiety and dishonesty, of contempt of God, and robbery of man. Not only was "the house of prayer for all nations" abominably polluted by what fell from the flocks and herds for sacrifice, but it was literally perverted into "a den of thieves," who had entered into a wicked combination to prey upon the public, by enhancing the price of an article which was at once a necessary of life and of religion. These two enormities, however, generally go hand in hand. If there is no fear of God before a man's eyes, his neighbour has but a slender hold upon either his veracity or integrity, when the falsehood may be uttered, or the fraud committed without danger of detection. And, on the other hand, he who deliberately practises deceit upon "his brother whom he had seen," cannot have a very high degree of reverence for "God whom he hath not seen."

While we contemplate with shame and sorrow the corruptions which disgraced the Jewish church, is it possible to refrain from lamenting the equally deplorable corruptions which have disfigured the hallowed form of christianity? Did not all history attest the truth of it, who would believe that there was a long period, not yet quite expired in some parts of christendom, and that there was a succession of priests, called christians, who presumed, for a piece of money, to grant a man indulgence to commit every species of wickedness, which his corrupt heart might suggest, and for any given period, with complete impunity? Who could believe that this priest, in consideration



of something cast into his treasury, would take upon him to issue a pardon of the most atrocious offences, and thereby screen the vilest of offenders from punishment; nay, confer the power of pardoning on stone walls and lifeless altars? The murderer who smote his brother to death in the open street, in broad day, had but to step into the next church, and it stood always open on purpose, to be protected from the vengeance of the law. Who could believe that a present or bequest to the church was considered as a full compensation for all the crimes of a life of violence, and rapine, and blood, and as a fair passport to the kingdom of heaven? That such things should ever have existed is most wonderful; that they should have maintained their ground over all Europe for many centuries together is most wonderful. But the scandalous usurpation is hastening to a close. And with the downfall of popery, may every remaining error in the doctrine, discipline and practice of the churches of the reformation finally terminate.

The disciples of our Lord possessed one great preparatory qualification for the exercise of their future ministry, acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Struck with this display of their master's zeal for the honour of God, and for the purity of temple worship, they call to remembrance a text from the psalms of David, which appeared to them a prefiguration of what had just passed. "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." We pretend not to affirm that the words of the psalmist amount to a prediction of what Christ felt, and said, and did upon this occasion. David unquestionably uttered his own feelings, though there was as yet no temple at Jerusalem dedicated to the most High God. But the expression amounts to this: Whatever affects the character and worship of Deity,



I make my personal concern. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up:" ardent regard for the honour of thy sanctuary, like a secret flame pent up in my breast, must either have vent or consume me: and the sequel is in the same spirit, "and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." But though we may not have here a direct prophecy of a future event, we have a powerful assimilation between two most eminent personages, at very distant periods, breathing one, and the same spirit, aiming at one and the same end; and this similitude partakes of the nature of prophecy. And the whole leads us to this conclusion, that there may be predictions, resemblances, analogies in Scripture, hitherto concealed even from the wise and prudent, to be hereafter unfolded, or perhaps reserved for the instruction and delight of the kingdom of heaven, when there shall be in Scripture nothing obscure, or hard to be understood. What a motive is this, now to listen to the command of Christ. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

In this passage of our Lord's history, as in all Scripture, we have many things "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

1. We have a humiliating view of the treachery and deceitfulness of the human heart. The very persons who considered it as a crime to "eat bread with unwashen hands," could quietly digest the profanation of the temple and of the worship of God. Such self-delusion do men practise every day. They treat their own infirmities as some mothers do very homely, wayward, or even deformed children, who not only shew them all possible indulgence themselves, but are offended if others adopt not their fondness and partiality. At the same time, the slightest blemish in the character of another is quickly seen and severely censured. The



deception is frequently carried much farther. A man shall actually discern and rigidly condemn in his neighbour, the very fault to which he himself is notoriously addicted. The proud person can endure no one's pride but his own; the passionate stand astonished at the transports of those who are hasty like themselves; and who are so severe upon hypocrisy, as the hypocritical? Every lesson taught by the great Teacher has a foundation in human corruption, and has a tendency to correct it, and this is an important one: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." To which I subjoin the prayer of the psalmist: Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

2. If such were the dignity which the Son of God assumed, and the authority which he exercised, while he tabernacled with men upon earth, attended by a few simple Galileans, is it not a matter of very serious concern to meditate on the majesty and importance of his coming to judge the quick and the dead? If his presence was thus awful and tremendous when armed with only "a scourge of small cords," what must it be, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the



presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In this judgment to come we are all equally interested, and we are furnished with a present rule of judgment in the decisions of conscience and the dictates of the word of God. Happy is that man who understands, believes and improves the testimony of those faithful and true witnesses; who, knowing the terrors of the Lord, is persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." These last words open a brighter prospect and disclose to us "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and sending his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Then shall he be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." Thus are good and evil, death and life, the blessing and the curse set before us. Thus all that is terrible in justice, armed with almighty power, addresses itself to our fear, and all that is amiable and alluring in unbounded goodness and love, expands to our hope, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." May we this day know him as a Saviour whom we must in that day meet as a judge. May we have wisdom to com-



ply with the counsel of him, as a friend, whom it is certain and utter ruin to encounter as an adversary.

“Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.”

3. Take care, frail, ignorant, erring man, how thou proposest to thyself the purifier of the temple as a pattern of zeal. “It is good,” saith the apostle, “to be zealously affected always in a good thing;” but unless zeal be directed by prudence and knowledge, it may produce incredible mischief. There is a zeal about trifles, which diverts the mind from objects of serious importance. Battles have been fought, and volums written to determine the posture in which the sacrament ought to be received, and the habit to be worn by the priest in reading the service of the church. While contention about such non-essentials waxed hot, the spirit of piety and prayer grew cold. There is a zeal which is the offspring of prejudice and habit. It actuated Saul of Tarsus, when “he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and hauling men and women, committed them to prison;” and while he “yet breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord:” and when, speaking of himself, he says: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” There is a vain, glorious, ostentatious zeal, which cannot bear to pass unobserved, which must be fed with public attention and admiration. Such is that which inspired Jehu, when he exultingly challenged applause: “Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.” There is a ma-



lignant, intolerant zeal, which pities not, spares not. Even the disciples James and John were under its influence, when a village of the Samaritans refused to receive their master, “Lord,” say they, “wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” and it received a just and severe reprehension from the mouth of Christ: “He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” The disciples themselves became the victims of this fiery, exterminating zeal as Christ predicted concerning them. “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” Thus the hard measure which they would have meted to others, was measured out unto themselves. But there is a zeal, as well as a doctrine, “which is according to godliness:” a pure and lambent flame of love to God, which admits of no mixture of human passion, which views every object through the medium of Deity, and aims but at one end, that God may be glorified. This excellent spirit will never think of doing God service, by shewing unkindness or cruelty to man. But it is so rare and so easily counterfeited, that even its emotions are to be regarded with a jealous eye, for there is no small danger of a man’s mistaking the ebullitions of his own mind, for the impulse of God’s spirit, especially in cases where guilt is to be condemned and vengeance executed. David made a wise and a happy choice, when constrained to submit to one of three great evils. “I am in a great strait;” saith he, “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall into the hand of man.” I like not to see the scourge, the sword, the torch voluntarily assumed by one of like passions with myself. In vehement attempts to reform abuse, I should tremble to



think of their degenerating into a rage to destroy. The tremendous attribute of vengeance, God will confide to no hands but his own, but he permits man to carry the imitation of divine mercy as far as he can. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; If he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

4. Mark the power of conscience, and learn to secure its testimony in your favour. What made cowards of those gross and brutal men ? An ill conscience. What chased away a multitude before one man ? An ill conscience. What overawed a rapacious priesthood and a licentious populace ? An ill conscience. Conscience drove our guilty progenitors to seek concealment "from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden." Conscience sent out murderous Cain "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," under the dire apprehension that every one who found him would slay him. It is conscience that dictates the unavailing cry to despairing wretches, who in bitterness exclaim, "to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come : and who shall be able to stand ?" But what, in opposition to this, is the source of a christian's composure and satisfaction ? "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Hererein consisted the triumph of the apostle over the fear of the Roman governor, and over the oratory of Tertullus ; "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and toward men." And this



constitutes the triumph and the security of every believer in Christ Jesus : “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope : and hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

Though the buyers and sellers were abashed and put to flight some of the consequential cavillers, who are to be found in every age, and in every society, maintain the ground, and call for the commission under which Jesus acted. “ Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ? This furnished him with a fair occasion of bringing forward the peculiar and distinguishing doctrine of his religion, the resurrection of the body, which was soon to be exemplified in his own resurrection from the dead, as “ the first fruits of them that sleep.” This will accordingly constitute the subject of the next lecture. “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power ; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ :”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XIX.

*Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews. forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? but he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men: and needed not that any should testify of man: For he knew what was in man.—JOHN xi. 18—25.*

**T**HE actions and events of Christ's life are the basis on which the truth and importance of his doctrine rest, and the solidity of the foundation must be estimated from the structure which it supports. The foundation of a building lies buried under ground, and cannot be examined by the eye; but when we behold a stately, lofty and venerable pile, which has withstood the attack of ages, and which still presents undiminished beauty and strength, we justly reason from what we do see to what we do not; and we feel ourselves constrained to applaud the excellency of the design, from the perfectness and durability of the exe-



cution. "Behold," saith the Lord God, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, more than seven centuries before the fabric began to appear, "behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet." Here is the design of the sovereign architect, not sleeping like many a beautiful human plan in the portfolio of the artist, never to be realized, but quick with the spirit of life, already executed "in the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and to arise, in due time the wonder of angels and of men. This building of God at length began to appear and to ascend. But it accorded not with human ideas of grandeur and magnificence. The very depositaries of the original design, were the first to resist the completion of it, because it justified not their prejudices and prepossessions. Their opposition, however, served only more illustriously to display the manifold wisdom and goodness of God, and to expose the weakness and folly of man. Had the edifice been man's devising and rearing, it could not have stood "the washing of a tide," for the "foolish man built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." But infinite wisdom founded the fabric of christianity upon a rock. The rains have descended, the floods have come, the winds have blown and beaten upon this house, but it has not fallen; for it is founded upon a rock.

In the gospel history we behold the ground floor or platform of the christian religion. It principally consists in a narration of plain, unadorned facts, well authenticated, indeed, but recommended by no artificial polish, and deriving all their importance and effect from their own native truth and excellence, serving,



nevertheless, as a solid support to the precepts, the promises, the predictions, the doctrines, the consolations of our most holy faith. Take, for instance, the event which our blessed Lord, in the passage which has now been read, foretold concerning himself, namely, that the temple of his body should be destroyed, and in three days raised up again. Now when this event actually did take place, not only was the veracity of Jesus as a prophet, completely established, but a foundation was laid of sufficient strength to sustain the whole weight of the christian's hope, of a resurrection to life and immortality. We shall, therefore, first consider this all important doctrine, in the history which is the foundation of it, and then in the superstructure reared.

In purifying the temple from the abominations practised in it, Jesus had undoubtedly assumed the authority of one invested in the office of magistracy, or with the character of a prophet. That he was no magistrate all men knew, and he never pretended to it. To have acted in this capacity might have been considered as usurpation. As a prophet, then, and only as a prophet, could he appear in the character of a public reformer. But it is requisite that a prophet should produce his credentials. This suggested the demand: "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" which plainly implied, that one acting under a commission from heaven, was obliged to support his claim by a sign from heaven. But is there need to produce supernatural testimony to a right to reform known, public, flagrant abuse? Did not their own history furnish a noted instance of a private person's assuming the sword of justice, and acting at once as judge and executioner, in the case of open and gross violation of the divine law; that of Phinehas, who was but the grandson of Aaron the priest? He not only became liable to no censure, but obtained a deathless name, and an honourable office for



his seasonable interposition. "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment : and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore." Did not the sign, in the present instance, appear in the act? Did not the great reformer authenticate his powers by the manner in which he exercised them, and by the effect which they produced? Did the guilty resist? Did they call in question his authority? Did they drag him, in their turn, to the tribunal? No, they feel his ascendant and shrink from his rebuke. Who, then, call for a sign? Not the offenders; they had received sufficient evidence: not the populace, for they must have been equally overawed and confounded. The rulers of the Jews hearing of this singular transaction, some of them, perhaps, being on the spot, and eye-witnesses of what had passed, jealous of their honour, and considering their prerogative as invaded; they, as men having authority demanded a sign. From their general character, and from the inefficacy of this and other signs afterwards given, we know from what motive the present demand was made; not in the spirit of meekness, not from the love of truth, not to obtain conviction; but in the hope of finding occasion to censure, or of putting the assumed authority of Christ to a test which it could not stand.

A sign is given them, and a most remarkable one it is. "Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Whatever construction the Jews might put on these words, what Jesus intended to convey is obvious, and it was in every point justified by the corresponding event. He who is simplicity and truth itself could have no design to mislead. The action and emphasis with which he spake, clearly pointed out the object. The general attention had just been directed to a temple made with hands, a temple wickedly profaned by an abominable traffic, which was connived at by its professed conservators, and whose honour had been so nobly vindicated



by a stranger. That stranger had already attracted general notice, by the singularity of his speech and deportment; every eye was fixed upon him, his every attitude and gesture were observed, and these plainly indicated that the temple to be destroyed, and raised up in three days, could not be the venerable pile in the court of which this conversation passed. When he afterwards foretold the approaching destruction of *that* temple, he expressed himself in terms not liable to misapprehension. "As he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Now he points to an edifice infinitely more sacred. From both the first and second houses built on mount Zion the glory had long since departed. The sensible tokens of the divine presence were withdrawn. The holy oracle was no longer consulted by Urim and Thummim. But in Him, who was the only glory of the second house, "dwelled all the fulness of the godhead bodily," and the destruction of this temple he thus predicts as a sign not to the men of that generation only, but to all ages, even to the end of the world. From the very nature of prophecy, a veil must be drawn between the prediction and the event. "Hope that is seen is not hope," and "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Christ indulges not those unbelievers with an immediate display of his miraculous power, in support of his pretensions to the character of a prophet, which they could easily have explained away, or misinterpreted; but he refers them to a sign shortly to be exhibited, which should be, at once, the exact accomplishment of a well known prediction, and the greatest miracle that can possibly exist. That the misconception of the Jews was perverse and



affected is evident from this, that when they had actually fulfilled the part of the prediction which depended on themselves, by destroying that sacred temple, we find them labouring under the most dreadful apprehension that Jesus would accomplish the other part, which depended on him, and they employ every precaution, which terror could suggest, to prevent and defeat it. "The chief priests and pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people. He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." And when the astonished watch came into the city, and made report to their employers, of "all the things that were done," did it produce conviction? No, it only filled them with mortification, and kindled rage. "The chief priests, when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, say, ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governour's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you." To what purpose, then, ask for a sign? They resist and reject the most illustrious, which, with reverence be it spoken, God himself could give, thereby approving the truth of what Jesus on another occasion said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

"Destroy this temple." Let it be observed, that this is simply a prediction or supposition, and not a precept, equivalent to, *ye will* destroy this temple, or, *though ye should* destroy this temple. It is a mode of expression that frequently occurs in Scripture. Thus in the Old Testament, Joseph says to his bre-



thren “this do, and live,” that is, do this, and *ye shall* live. Thus God speaks to Moses. “Get thee up into this mountain, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people,” meaning evidently, *thou shalt die* in the mount, and *shalt* be gathered unto thy people. Thus, Isaiah viii. 10. “Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand:” that is, *though ye* take counsel together, and *though ye* speak the word. And in the New Testament, the word of Christ to Judas, “that thou dost, do quickly,” cannot be considered as a command to accomplish his plan of treachery, but merely as an intimation that he was seen through, and that under the impulse of a diabolical spirit, he was hurrying on to commit that dreadful enormity. Thus Paul exhorts, “Be angry and sin not;” surely not as if he meant to encourage violent transports of wrath, but in the event of a man’s giving way to a fit of passion, the apostle means to guard him against excessive indulgence in it, by restricting its duration to the going down of the sun. This early notice did Jesus give, not to his disciples only, but to all who came to worship in the temple, “of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;” that it should be effected by the hand of violence; not by decay, but by destruction, and that his own countrymen should be the perpetrators of it. This declaration was frequently repeated, and became plainer and plainer, till the fact justified every particular of the prediction.

“This *temple*.” Our blessed Lord in this place and elsewhere denominates his body a temple, as declaratory of his superiority to the lofty pile on Mount Zion, even in its greatest glory, much more in its then degraded, defiled state. “I say unto you,” addressing himself to pharisees, “that in this place is one greater than the temple,” because Deity resided continually



and inseparably in him, as the Jews believed he did in that which was built by Solomon, in answer to that petition; “O Lord my God, hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day: that thine eyes may be opened toward this house, night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there:” according as it was foretold by Moses near five centuries before: “Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.” Josephus informs us that not only did the answer to Solomon’s prayer imply a real and sensible residence of Deity, but that it was the universal belief of the Jews and of the strangers who visited Jerusalem, that there was an ingress of God into the temple, and a habitation in it; and, in another place that God descended and pitched his tabernacle there. The Jews themselves, however, admitted, that whatever glory these expressions might signify was now departed. To restore that glory, and to bestow it on the second temple in more abundant measure than the first ever possessed was the end of Christ’s mission; and in him was the prediction fulfilled: “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.” He was that oracle by whose answers all light and truth were emitted; the true Schechinah who had the spirit without measure: he was anointed with the “oil of gladness above his fellows,” and thus in all respects greater than the temple. *That* temple, says he, which you have defiled I have cleansed: and *this* temple of my body, which you are going to destroy, I will raise up again.

When this prediction was verified by the matter of fact, that fact became the foundation of one of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, the resurrection of the dead. Jesus early taught and frequently repeated it, that it might be clearly understood and carefully remembered. The impostor is at pains to conceal his



purpose till it is ripe for execution. He fears prevention, and therefore endeavours to take you by surprise. The thief gives no warning of his approach, but comes upon men while they sleep. The true prophet discloses his design, prepares, forwarns, puts the person who doubts or disbelieves upon his guard, bids defiance to prevention. His own resurrection, and the doctrine of a general resurrection, which is founded upon it, were not barely hinted at, or declared in obscure and equivocal terms. They were not the casual topic, and for once only, of private conversation with his disciples. No, this was a leading, a commanding object, presented continually to view, placed in the strongest light, announced with equal fairness and simplicity, to friends and to enemies. “And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again.” He declares the same truth thus openly in the court of the temple. He repeats it in the presence and hearing of the multitude, “when the people were gathered thick together, then certain of the scribes and of the pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The sadducees, opponents still more virulent than the pharisees, perfectly understood him as meaning on the basis of his own, to establish the belief of a resurrection of the body; for they argue with him on the subject, and frame a case which they supposed would reduce the



author of the doctrine to an absurdity. This afforded our Lord an opportunity of shewing that the doctrine in dispute was actually an article in their own creed, as being the disciples of Moses. Thus it runs through the whole of divine Revelation. The fathers beyond the flood lived and died in this faith. The dust of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob thus rested and rests in hope. It is indeed more clearly stated under the Gospel dispensation, and the ground of it is more fully demonstrated, that is, the dawning light of the morning gradually brightened into the perfect day.

“In three days *I* will raise it up.” This is an explicit declaration of his own inherent Deity, for God alone has the right and the power over life and death. An angel may be the delegated instrument in executing the sentence of divine justice by taking away life; as in the case of the first born of Egypt, of those who fell by the pestilence, to the number of seventy thousand, for the offence of David in numbering the people, and of the hundred, fourscore and five thousand smitten in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians. But we nowhere find the power of quickening the dead delegated to a created being. Man has the desperate power of destroying his own body, but there it ends, and the disembodied spirit ceases from all power to repair the awful violence which it has committed. Man cannot by a mere act of his will even lay down his life, any more than he can reanimate the breathless clay. It is the incommunicable prerogative of him who has life in himself to dispose of it at pleasure. This prerogative Jesus Christ claims and exercises. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” In the case of his own death, it was an act of sovereign, almighty power. “Jesus said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and *gave* up the ghost,” while as yet the principle of natural life was strong within him, thus demonstrating that his assertion concerning himself was founded in



truth : “ I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself : I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” And on this power over his own life, he founds his right of dispensing life and death to others. “ And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.” Whether therefore it is said that “ Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,” or that he himself raised up the temple of his body, one and the same source of life, one controlling, irresistible will, and one supreme, efficient power are displayed.

“ Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building and wilt thou rear it up in three days ? It has been already shewn that this was a wilful misapprehension : and it exhibits a humiliating view of the power of prejudice. Something may be made of a stupid child, if he be disposed to exert the poor faculties which he possesses, but obstinacy sets discipline at defiance. It is possible to assist weak eyes, but what can be done for the man who wilfully shuts them, or who madly plucks them out ? To enter, with commentators, into discussion respecting the period of the temple’s rebuilding, is foreign to our purpose. What is it to us how long time was employed in the work, by what prince or princes it was carried on, and what was its comparative magnificence, with relation to the first temple, and to other structures of a similar kind ? But it is of high importance to know, that the prediction of Christ concerning it, already quoted, was exactly fulfilled, about forty years afterward : when Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Emperor



Titus, was pillaged and burnt, the temple completely destroyed, upwards of one million and one hundred thousand of the Jews destroyed by famine and the sword, ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners, the whole nation expatriated and dispersed, and that the state of the temple from the year of Christ seventy, down to the present, eighteen hundred and two, and of this scattered, degraded, yet providentially supported and distinguished people, at this day, are a standing evidence of the truth and certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed. He is faithful and true who promises and who threatens. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away."

"When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them." Words as they are spoken, and events as they pass, frequently make a slight impression, but when recalled and fixed by some striking correspondent circumstances, they rush on the mind like a torrent, and we wonder at our own preceding carelessness and



inattention. Had the disciples been men quick of apprehension, and of easy belief, the fabrication of a cunningly devised fable might have been suspected: but they were persons of a simplicity of character that sometimes bordered on stupidity; they were "slow of heart to believe;" they often misunderstood their master; they were of all mankind the most unfit to plan and support imposture. When Jesus spake of destroying and of raising up again the temple of his body, the Jews wilfully perverted his meaning, and his disciples seem hardly to have marked his words. The greatest of miracles must be performed to subdue the incredulity of the one, and to rouse the attention of the other. In both we contemplate the wrath and the weakness of man ministering to the glory of God. It was meet that the mouth of malignity should be stopped, and that the truth as it is in Jesus should be taught to the world by men whose own ignorance had been instructed, whose doubts had been removed, whose faith had been established. "We still have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, therefore, so clearly predicted, and so exactly accomplished, supplies the christian world, in every age, with the firmest basis of faith, and with the purest source of hope and joy. The apostle of the Gentiles, once the most violent opposer of the fact, and of the doctrine founded upon it, thus collects the evidence: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of



all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Paul's reasoning upon the subject is conclusive and satisfactory; it meets the human heart in all its desires and expectations. We resign ourselves to the stroke of death with composure. We bury our dead out of our sight, without bidding them a final farewell, because "the flesh also shall rest in hope." "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory."

The importance of this doctrine, in the scale of christianity, will warrant our following up the article of our Lord's history which we have been reviewing, to its more remote effects and consequences. This will accordingly form the substance of the following lecture.

This passover afforded occasion of working various other public miracles, which are not enumerated in the sacred record, but which attracted attention and produced conviction in the minds of many who saw and heard him. He was now at the metropolis of the country, and at the season of universal resort to Jerusalem. Of the multitudes who flocked thither to celebrate the feast of passover, very many must have been in the habit of searching the Scriptures, and were, with Simeon, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and with Anna the prophetess, "looking for redemption in Jerusalem." Persons of this description must have been forcibly impressed with the personal appearance of Jesus Christ, with the singularity of his manner and address, with the gravity and dignity of his deportment, with the authority which he exercised in teaching and reproof. His zeal in the



purgation of the temple, and the sign which he proposed as the evidence of his mission, must have been noticed and felt. When these proofs of an extraordinary character were accompanied and supported by a display of miraculous powers, the effect must have been what the evangelist relates : “ When he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did.” Nor was this impression confined to vulgar minds, for we presently find a mind high in rank and office bearing testimony to Christ’s prophetic character, and to the foundation on which it rested. “ Nicodemus, a pharisee and ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God ; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” But the sacred historian subjoins a reflection most humiliating to human nature ; for it implies that the understanding may be enlightened, and the conscience perfectly convinced, and yet the heart remains corrupted and malignant, “ Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” But the searcher of hearts discerned under a sound belief, a dangerous, and unsubdued perversity of disposition in which he could not confide. “ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” In this Christ acted as a pattern to his disciples, and conformed himself to the doctrine which he taught them. “ Beware of men ; be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” There is an excess of caution unworthy of a noble and generous mind, which damps exertion and poisons society. But there is also an excess of confidence which puts the candid and sincere in the power of the crafty and designing. True wisdom safely conducts its possessor through the channel which divides them. “ A prudent man,” says Solomon, “ foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself : but the simple pass on, and are punished.”



“The chapter concludes with an ascription to Christ of one of the incommunicable attributes of Deity, the knowledge of the thoughts of men: “He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” Of this he had given an illustrious instance in the case of Nathanael, whose character he clearly discerned before any personal intercourse had taken place: “Before that Philip called thee, when thou was under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” Here it is reduced to a general proposition of high moment. “The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son:” and he is qualified for the discharge of this all-important office, by a perfect knowledge not only of the actions of a man’s life, but of the motive from which he acted, and of the end at which he aimed. May it be engraved on the living table of our heart, that God “hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XX.

*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up ? And with what body do they come ? Thou fool that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh : but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial : but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead : it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.—*  
1 CORINTHIANS XV. 35—44.

**T**O him who believes in the life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel ; to him who has the witness of death every day presented to his eyes, and who feels it continually in his own frame,



can it ever be unseasonable or unprofitable to hear of the ground of his holy faith, of his glorious privileges, of his exalted hope? Does the worldling ever tire in calculating his gains, and of reckoning over his hoard? Is the eager heir ever cloyed in contemplating his fair and ample expected inheritance? When were the praises, the reported successes, wisdom and virtue of a darling child, a burden on the listening ear of parental affection? When was the eye fatigued in surveying the beautiful and majestic fabric of nature, or turned away from it with disgust? Wherefore, then, should it be apprehended that the disciple of Jesus, who has fled for refuge to the hope set before, whose brightest prospects open beyond the grave, who is rejoicing in the promise of his master's coming "the second time, without sin, unto salvation;" wherefore suppose that such a person could say, "What a weariness is it!" when the preacher's theme is the complete restoration of man's fallen nature, the resurrection of man's fallen nature, the resurrection of the body, the perfect resemblance of all the members of Christ to the glorious head, the final and unfading triumph of redeeming love? No, well pleased, you withdraw from the pursuit of temporal pleasure and profit, from surveying the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, from contemplating even the more glorious wonders of the starry heavens, to expatiate over the blissful regions of Emanuel's land, to drink of "the pure river of the water of life," to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, to feast on the promise of "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," where there is no more death, where the curse is not known, where God himself shall wipe away all tears from all eyes.

Previous to the breaking of bread, in commemoration of our Saviour's dying love to perishing sinners, we were led to meditate on the final consummation which the ordinance has directly in view. "As often



as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come;" an event which involves in itself the fate of angels and of men; an event which shall exhibit the grandest display of the divine power and wisdom, of justice, goodness, and truth; an event which is at once the object of just terror, and the purest source of joy. One, and that not the least interesting consideration connected with the prospect of that "great and notable day of the Lord," is that which constitutes the subject of the apostle's reasoning in the passage which has now been read, namely, the resurrection of the dead. The ground of belief respecting this, is the truth and certainty of Christ's resurrection on the third day after his passion, conformably to frequently repeated, well known, and absolutely particular predictions respecting this illustrious event. These were the subject of the preceding lecture. "Jesus and the resurrection," were the great theme of Paul's preaching at learned Athens, and of his epistles to the churches, particularly to the Corinthians in this chapter. This is the sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and lo, what a structure is Providence rearing upon it!

The apostle introduces an unbeliever, cavilling at the doctrine of the resurrection, and triumphantly demanding, as one defying all possibility of reply, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Grasping at mere phantoms of wordly hope, credulous as children in admitting "the unreal, mockery" of a heated imagination, men doubt and disbelieve only when the God of truth speaks; they are careless only where their spiritual and everlasting interests are concerned: they reject that which reason and religion concur to prove, which the constitution and frame of nature, in her unceasing re-productions, stamp with striking marks of probability, and which a revelation from heaven has rendered infallible. The objection of infidelity,



proceeds on the supposition that there is nothing apparent in the system of the universe which is analagous to the resurrection of the body ; that it is inconsistent with all knowledge and experience. The apostle goes on to demonstrate that this change, wonderful as it is, has its counterpart in nature, and is perfectly consistent with appearances which fall every day under every man's observation, and which are level to every human capacity. He refers the infidel to the universally known and understood progress of vegetation, which is a constant representation of death and the resurrection, of corruptibility and corruption. One of the most obvious and ordinary operations in husbandry, daily presents the image of this great mystery of godliness. The seed, O man, which thou castest into the ground, is surrendered to loss, to putrefaction, to death. It disappears, it seems for ever gone, its form and substance, all, all is dissolved. No, Sir, it dies but to be quickened. Indeed it could not have been quickened, unless it had died. What dropped into the earth, a single, solitary grain, springs up out of it, increased thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. Had the little seed never known corruption, where would have been that goodly tree laden with golden fruit ? It fell naked into the ground ; it rises thence clothed with a new, verdant, transparent covering. It every day unfolds some latent beauty, it assumes a more majestic form, it expands an unknown excellence. Its temporary destruction is its perennial establishment.

“ So also is the resurrection of the dead.” The body was emaciated by disease, it withered by reason of age, it was lost in the grave, it became a mass of corruption. But does it follow that it shall remain for ever a prey to corruption ? Does it follow, that it shall rise again with the self-same qualities which it formerly possessed ? No, it is the glory of God not to raise up again weakness, mortality, corruption ; but



out of weakness to raise power, to clothe corruption with incorruption, to swallow up mortality of life. But *how* is this done? I cannot tell. O man, "thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." Who is able to trace and to describe the common process of vegetable nature? Where is the man that presumes to explain that which is least? Is it any wonder, then, that limited faculties are lost in the investigation of that which is greatest? Can the clown tell how the handful of "bare grain" which he scattered along the surface of the ground, has been transformed into a multitude of stately, fair and fragrant plants? No, and neither can the philosopher. But the simplest clown is a philosopher too enlightened to doubt, or to disbelieve what uniform observation and experience have confirmed to him. He is too wise to suspend the operations of his useful and necessary art, till he has discovered the *how* and the *wherefore* of it. Can the philosopher then arrogate to himself the praise of wisdom, who refuses the information, and denies himself the consolations of christianity, because he cannot penetrate into every mystery, resolve every difficulty, and dispel all the obscurity which it presents? What one art of science has been carried to its highest possible perfection? Do men therefore neglect to avail themselves of the progress which has been made in science? And shall the most profound of all sciences, but which has, of all others, been most successfully investigated, whose discoveries are far more in number, and their nature infinitely more important than all the rest, be laughed to scorn, be despised and rejected, because it presents "some things hard to be understood," because some of its grander discoveries are reserved to a future exhibition, because there are "times and seasons," interpositions, relations and dependencies "which the Father hath put in his own power."



Again, "God," it is said, "giveth to every seed his own body." "Thou fool," argues St. Paul, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." This implies, that the change produced by the resurrection is not arbitrary or contingent, but established by a certain law, conformably to the nature and qualities of each distinct species. What was wheat continues to be wheat, after it has arisen again. What was any other kind of grain, when cast into the earth, rises up that self-same kind of grain, and no other. The individual substance is indeed changed, but the essential properties, the specific and distinguishing qualities remain. The same vital principle animates it in every state; when it sprung up in the germ of the parent seed; when it became naked, dry grain; when it lay buried under the clod; when it mouldered away and died, and when it started up again in all the vigour and freshness of a new life. Doth not man, in like manner, in his body, in his mind, in his condition, undergo revolutions equally obvious, equally impressive, and yet continue always the same? He possesses life and motion long before he begins to breathe; he lives, moves, and breathes long before he begins to reflect and reason. The dawnings of his reason are not greatly superiour to the instincts of some of the brute creation. Arrived, at length, at fulness of stature and of understanding, his faculties, like the tide at full, are instantly on the decline. Accident destroys them, vice deranges, disease impairs, age wastes them. All the while it was one and the same being who struggled in the womb, who crawled in infancy, who tottered in childhood, who flew on the wings of the wind in youth, who stately walked in the



majesty of manhood, who again stooped, bended, tottered, crept under the pressure of old age, who sunk in death. It was the self-same individual who now blazed in all the lustre of talents, station and success, who strutted the envy and wonder of mankind, and who now moped and blinked in premature second childishness, the pity and scorn of the world. Explain to me wherein consisted the sameness which ran through all the successive changes of a short and transitory life of threescore years and ten, and you will teach yourself to conceive what it is that constitutes the identity of that which was sown "a natural body," and which shall be raised "a spiritual body."

Instead of vainly attempting to account for the *sameness*, is it not rather the part of wisdom to contemplate, and endeavour to improve the *difference* of the one from the other, as it stands displayed in the person of Christ the first-fruits, on the hallowed page of inspiration? The temple of his body was both before and after his passion free from stain and blemish: but every other human frame has in it radical pollution and corruption. It is *earthly*, a mass of clay, taken from the earth, dependent upon it, chained down to it, and ready to be swallowed up of it again. It *shall be heavenly*, spiritual, impassive; endowed with the capacity of moving with the expedition of thought, the celestial vehicle of an immortal spirit, adapted to the vigour and activity of that spirit, subservient to its will, on the wing at pleasure, up to its native seat, with the velocity of lightning in the east, at the west, according as the command of the Most High, or the desire of surveying his ways and his works may determine the choice. Roused by that voice which awakens the dead, behold the human body arrayed in light; it attempts a region, it mingles with elements untried before; it spurns the tomb, it mounts on high,



it springs up "to meet the Lord in the air," it mixes with angels, it checks the aspiring flight, and presents the first-fruits of eternal bliss before the throne, it joins with adoration, love and joy in the song of the Lamb: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests; worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing:" "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

It is now a *vile* body; composed of gross elements, subsisting on gross aliment, subjected to the same laws which govern the beasts that perish. It may be rendered loathsome by sloth, by infirmity, by disease, by vice, by death. The loveliest form is in one hour so altered, so disfigured, that we are obliged to turn from it with horror and aversion. Abraham must hasten to bury his Sarah out of his sight. Remove that transparent veil of skin which the hand of nature has so curiously spread over the sinews and the flesh, and what a frightful spectre instantly appears! Imagination shrinks from the hideous apparition. It shall rise a *glorious* body, composed of the purer elements which fly upward, living on incorruptible food, a pellucid wall of fire through which every emotion of the soul is distinctly visible but which no sword of the adversary can penetrate, unsusceptible of wound, unsusceptible of depression, of weariness, of pain, of decay. In this world of wo the body has a glory not belonging to it, a glory that is its disgrace, its misery; the unnatural, ruinous glory of holding the immortal spirit in thralldom, of leading its sovereign captive at its will, of bending the heaven-born mind to the ignominious drudgery of the flesh. In the world of bliss, the real order of nature shall be restored, the spirit shall



resume its just empire, the body shall be invested with its proper glory, shall descend into its subordinate station ; shall feel its highest gratification in becoming the ministering servant of intelligence, of rectitude, of benignity.

That we may not seem all this while to have been retailing a fond man's dream, we recur to the history of the wonderful changes which the bodies of some men have already undergone, and from which we may conclude what future changes, through the almighty power of God, the human frame is capable of undergoing. " By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death : and was not found, because God had translated him : " his body, without being resolved into its principles, without tasting death, was quickened into newness of life, and entered into the kingdom of heaven without passing through the grave. Moses subsisted for forty days together in the mount with God, and neither did eat nor drink. On his descent, the skin of his face shone so as to dazzle the eyes of the beholder, and to render the interposition of a veil necessary. At the age of one hundred and twenty years, " his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." After a lapse of fifteen centuries, he revisited our earth in a glorious form, to do homage on the mount of transfiguration. Elijah, undismayed, mounts on fiery wheels to meet his God. His body, in an instant of time, acquires the power of resisting, of repelling the flame, or becomes assimilated to it, and burns unconsumed. The three children of the captivity, fall down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, but arise and walk through the flames uninjured. Paul is " caught up to the third heaven," carried out of himself, transported into Paradise, and made to hear " unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

But even those illustrious instances " have no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth." The glory to be conferred on every believer's vile body is, that it



“shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Let us, therefore, take our ideas of the future “exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” from what we know it was in him. What must have been the majesty of his person, and the dignity of his deportment when he expelled the profaners of the temple, and they answered him never a word? With what energy and eloquence must he have expressed himself when a multitude under the influence of violent prejudice against him, overcome by force of truth, exclaimed, “Never man spake like this man.” Behold him in the midst of the sea; the yielding waves become a pavement of adamant under his feet. He spake the word, and the wind ceases to rage, and the tempest subsides into a calm. Moses endured, supported a fast of forty days and forty nights in communion with God; Jesus underwent a similar period of abstinence in the wilderness, being tempted of the devil. Mark that band of ruffians, assembled to apprehend him in the garden: they are lost to decency, lost to shame, they are ready to rush upon their prey: He arrays himself in mildness, he simply demands, “whom seek ye?” They instantly feel how awful goodness is, they shrink from the lustre of his eye. When with native, irresistible majesty he meets the inquiry, “I am he,” they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Such was the glory of that sacred body while as yet it had not invested itself with immortality; while as yet it was liable to pain, and sorrow, and death. But he displayed an anticipated view, even in a state of humiliation, of that splendour which he could assume and lay down at pleasure. On Tabor his whole form was altered; “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” This however was to undergo an eclipse. The Scripture must be fulfill-



ed which saith, " His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." But after the resurrection from the dead, this occasional and transient glory, became permanent and immutable. Behold, he bursts asunder the bars of the grave. On the third day he raises up again the temple which the hands of wicked men had destroyed. Earth and heaven feel and acknowledge a present Deity. The sons of light descend from their thrones to announce his revival, to minister at his feet. The solid globe is thrown into convulsions. " There was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow : and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Early in the morning of the first day, he appears unto Mary, but " her eyes are holden that she shall not see him ;" she supposes him to be the gardener, and in the bitterness of her soul exclaims : " Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." In the twinkling of an eye, his voice, his appearance changes, and as his lips pronounce, in their well known accent, the name of Mary, he stands confessed to the astonished mourner as her Lord and her God.

At a more advanced period of that same day, we behold him on the road which leadeth from Jerusalem to Emmaus, on which he found two of his disciples, " talking together of all these things which had happened." He joins himself to them, as they walked on their way in sadness. He enters into conversation with them ; he expounds to them the Scriptures concerning himself. They are deeply affected, they are edified, their hearts burn within them, as he talks with them by the way, and while he opens to them the Scriptures. But all the while his body is



concealed under a veil through which their eyes cannot pierce. In a moment the veil is withdrawn, as he blesses the bread, breaks it, and gives it to them ; they recognize their much lamented, greatly beloved master, he has resumed his form, and in an instant disappears : Their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight.

In the evening of that memorable first day of the week, the eleven and their companions being assembled to worship, and the doors carefully shut for fear of the Jews, lo, he is in the midst of them, speaking and dispensing peace. And yet it is the same body which was crucified. It bears the print of the nails which pierced his hands and his feet. His side presents the scar of the wound inflicted by the soldier's spear. But that celestial body is no longer subject to the laws of matter. Walls of stone can neither exclude nor confine a spiritual substance. Gates and bars have no power of coercion ; they are passed without being opened. Behold the first-fruits of them that sleep. Behold the proof, the pledge, the model of the resurrection from the dead. Behold the glory which awaits all the redeemed of the Lord, in that day when he maketh up his jewels.

Let us take one glimpse more of the Saviour's glorified body. See, he leads out his wandering, delighted train as far as to Bethany, " seen of above five hundred brethren at once ;" he lifts up his hands and blesses them ; " and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Into this blessed image, Believer in Christ Jesus, thou art going to be transformed, That feeble body which sometimes can with difficulty creep to the house of prayer, to a communion table, " shall mount up with wings as eagles," shall behold the stars under its feet, shall range through unbounded space, shall ascend into the heaven of heavens, shall associate with the cherubim and with the seraphim, with



the bodies and spirits of just men made perfect, “shall with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” Such, christian, is the end of thy faith, the salvation of the soul, the redemption of the body from the grave. Such is the fruit of the love of God, the effect of Christ’s death, the operation of the Holy Spirit. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

The apostle suggests another very interesting idea on the subject of the resurrection. The children of the resurrection shall all be glorious, but the glory of all is not the same: for as in the natural world, “there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds;” as there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial, each invested with its peculiar and appropriate glory and excellency, as “there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.” Next to the uniformity and regularity which pervade the system of the universe, the diversity and variety of the productions of nature, and of the ways of Providence claim our attention and excite our admiration. To this diversity the field and the forest, the fragrant earth and the starry heavens are indebted for all their beauty. Hence the brute creation derives utility and importance, and human society its being and comfort. Under the addition of another orb similar to that which illumines and animates the world, nature would be oppressed, and mourn, and expire. Withdraw that single little moon, that speck in creation, that mere attendant minister on our globe, and what a blank is left in the system, what myriads are rendered comfortless, how the harmony is destroy-



ed ! Countless, as various are the stars in the firmament ; but the subtraction, the transposition, the accelerated or retarded motion of one of the least of them would unhinge the general frame, unsettle the balance, and introduce confusion. But arranged as they are, counterpoised, sustained by the arm of Omnipotence, every one lends its portion of strength, beauty and stability to the whole. Each orb reflects lustre on its opposite ; an harmonious discord becomes productive of perfect union ; every thing differs, and yet every thing agrees. In the present imperfect state of the moral world, we must not look for the harmonious variety which reigns in the kingdom of nature. Society presents not only variety of rank, of talents, of possessions, but differences of opinion, oppositions of interest, the fermentation of passions. Offences will come, peace must be disturbed, blood must flow. But in the resurrection of the dead the harmonies of grace shall correspond to those of nature, for universal nature shall be under the dominion of love. " Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." From what has been said, let us,

1, Bless God for the clear light in which this all important doctrine is placed. The evidence of it pours into the eye, rushes into the heart every step we take. As often as we walk out into the corn-field, we have the image of death and of the resurrection of the dead. The husbandman cast in the seed that it might die, that it might see corruption. The sight of the springing grain assures us that he sowed in hope, and that his hope maketh him not ashamed. " So also is the resurrection of the dead." Every time the epicure sits down to a feast, he has in the



dainties of his table a representation of the varieties which the day of the renovation of all things shall display. Every time that the contemplative man “ considers the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained,” he perceives an image of the future glory of the redeemed. “ As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.” The weariness and wasting of the bodily vigour throws the human frame night by night into the semblance of death; the freshness of the dawn restores it to newness of life; “ so also is the resurrection of the dead,” “ them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” “ Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” Was not that stately oak once a dry acorn? Was not that gorgeous bird of a thousand radiant colours enclosed in a putrid shell? Did not that wonder of every eye, of every ear, once crawl a poor helpless reptile? How grievously do men err, “ not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God.”

2. The doctrine has a happy tendency to reconcile the mind to the prospect of our own dissolution. The body, the object of so much anxiety and attention, is after all but a flimsy garment, of feeble texture, and of perishable materials. And is it indeed such a mortification to lay down an old, rusty, galling armour, and go to rest at ease, when the labours and dangers of a hard warfare are at an end? Is it so very humiliating to part with worn-out raiment, with filthy rags, to exchange them for robes of immortality? This is the prospect which the resurrection opens to the christian’s hope. This is the change which passed upon Joshua the high-priest in prophetic vision, the emblem of final deliverance, of unfading glory. “ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, take away the filthy garments from



him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." These are words which deserve to be written, to be printed in a book, to be graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever : " I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me."

3. " I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." You have been called, it may be, to bury out of your sight what was once youth and beauty, talents and virtue, wisdom and piety. But these were, on earth, necessarily blended with weakness and imperfection. That weakness and imperfection remain in the grave, never to rise again. What are the transient youth and fading beauty of this world ? What are the talents and the virtues of the wisest and the best of men, compared to the celestial radiance, the immortal vigour, the unsullied purity, the sublime wisdom of beings shining in the redeemer's likeness ! Were it in your power, could you find in your heart, to bring back a beloved child, a friend dear to you as your own soul, to a state of depression, and pain, and sorrow ? No, the bitterness of death is past. The last enemy hath done his worst. They were first ready ; They have reached home before us. Therefore,

4. " Be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Be constantly aiming at higher degrees of moral and intellectual excellence ; at those qualities which, though



of little estimation in the eyes of men, are in the sight of God of great price, and constitute the glory of the kingdom of heaven. Be silently, unostentatiously adding, “with all diligence, to your faith, virtue, and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things:” Seeing that in the resurrection, those “who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake—and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XXI.

*So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee he went unto him, and besought him, that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was going down his servants met him, and told him, saying, thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee—JOHN iv. 46—54.*

**T**HE most serious business of human life make but a sorry figure when they come to be recorded. Interesting to the individual, and for the moment, they awaken no general concern, and become to the parties themselves, when the moment is past, “trifles light as air.” The avidity with which fresh journals are



read is a perfect contrast to the indifference with which they are treated on the second or the third day. Let a man sit down to write the history of his own life ; let him be the busiest and most important of personages, and what has he got to relate ? A meagre account of the miles he travelled, of the bargains he drove, of the spectacles he beheld, of the viands which covered his table, and of the guests who surrounded it. Into this little measure shrink the achievements of the great, the splendour, pomp and pride of kings, as well as the short and “ simple annals of the poor.” When the pageant has passed by, it is as a vision of the night, it vanishes into air, it leaves no track behind. In vain is the monumental column reared. The hand of time erases the inscription, shakes the fabrick, crumbles it into dust. In vain does history promise to save from oblivion, and to confer immortality. The author, his work, his subject, the very language in which he wrote, all perish.

Nevertheless there are illustrious exceptions. There have been persons whose names are dear to every succeeding generation, and who shall be had in everlasting remembrance ; who were engaged in pursuits of endless utility, and producing events which shall never spend their force. And there is a record which survives the lapse of ages, the ravages of barbarism, the revolutions of empire, and which shall outlive the dissolution of worlds. There we contemplate the deathless glory of the venerable benefactors of mankind, who “ being dead, yet speak,” who were and are the light of the world. All those scattered rays of light are collected into one focal point, in the person of Jesus Christ. “ To him give all the prophets witness ;” “ all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God ;”—“ the nations of them which are saved walk in his light, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”



In the busiest and most active life there are long and frequent intervals of repose. Much must be allowed to human infirmity both of body and mind; the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. One life alone displays an incessant progress in doing good; no word idly spoken, no moment unprofitably spent, no step unnecessarily taken. The night itself is made a season of devotion, the hour of social refreshment becomes an occasion of communicating useful knowledge; a walk into the corn-fields or by the shore of the sea, a journey from city to city, an ascent into the mountain, all are sacred to one commanding object, the glory of God and the good of mankind, the instruction of the ignorant, the pardon of the guilty, the relief of the miserable.

The solemnities of the passover being finished, Jesus, according to the wisdom which directed all his proceedings, thought it proper to retire from Jerusalem, and to return into Galilee. The road lay through Samaria. The inhabitants of that country, though descended from the same stock with the Jews, and once members together with them of the commonwealth of Israel, were now cordially hated and despised by them. But they possessed the same "lively oracles of God," they looked for the same Messiah promised to their common fathers, and they gladly received the word when it came unto them. The great Prophet whom they expected, takes this opportunity of paying them a visit; they acknowledge him, and believe on his name. Having continued with them two days, sowing the precious seed, expounding from Moses and all the prophets, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself, and thus extending the boundaries of the kingdom of God, he pursued his journey to Galilee, and returned "to Cana, where he made the water wine." Beside his general and leading object, to preach the gospel of the kingdom, he might intend, by revisiting that city, to express the affection of a kind



relation to the new-married pair, who resided there, to strengthen their union by his benediction, by his counsel, by participating in their domestic cares and comforts, and to confirm them and the other inhabitants of the place in the faith which they had professed.

It was so ordered of Providence, that at the time of his return, a distinguished family in the neighbouring town of Capernaum, was visited with a sore affliction. "There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum." The word translated *nobleman*, signifies courtier, one employed near the person, or in the service of a king. Herod was but a delegated and limited sovereign: "Tetrarch of Galilee," that is governor, under the Roman emperor, of the fourth part of a province. But he was permitted to assume the title and state of king, because it swelled the pride of the imperial despot to lord it over many subordinate and dependant thrones. Capernaum being within the limits of Herod's government, he no doubt occasionally resided in that city, and there probably at this time held his court; and the nobleman in question might either officially or from affection be in attendance upon his master. But the vicinity of a court, and the rank of nobility are no security against the inroads of disease and death, for they too are tainted with sin. The danger of losing a child excites a thousand anxieties in the bosom of a parent, whatever be the station or condition. There are innumerable circumstances which level all distinctions. The honourable feelings of humanity are of this description, parental and filial affection, with the kindred charities of the human heart, sympathy with the distressed, and a desire to assist and relieve them: these constitute a dignity, a nobility which God alone can bestow, and which the air of a court tends rather to blight than to cherish. This good man however has not sunk the father in the courtier. Anxiety about the life of his child suspends the pride of rank, the duties of office, the etiquette of nobility. "When



he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son : for he was at the point of death."

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." The fame of Jesus was now spread over the whole land. When he came back from Jerusalem to Galilee, "the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast : for they also went unto the feast." The report which they made at home, of his mighty works, as well as of his condescension and benevolence, had reached the ears of the great, and excited attention. We fondly listen to what promises ease ; we grasp the very shadows of probability, and frequently make experiments with little hope of success. All that medical skill could effect had, in this case, undoubtedly been attempted, but attempted in vain. It is one, and not the least of the evils attendant on poverty, to know of a remedy without the means of procuring it. The rich have at least this consolation in extremity, that every thing was done which influence could command, or money purchase. But the nobleman of Capernaum is not to be taxed with credulity for believing the report concerning Christ, or for building upon it the hope of a cure which medicine had been unable to effect. Instead of sending for him, as in the case of ordinary physicians, "he went to him." The distance between Capernaum and Cana was about a day's journey, as we may gather from verse 52. He was met on his way homeward, rejoicing in the belief of the power and grace of Christ, the day after he had received the assurance : "Yesterday," said the servants, "at the seventh hour the fever left him." Here then we have nobility descending from its stateliness, waving ceremony, assuming the form of a suppliant. Was it thereby degraded ? No, to follow the honest impulse of nature, to submit to the obligations of propriety and decorum, to employ fair means to obtain a desirable



end, is no degradation, even to a prince. Vice alone degrades, and exposes a man to shame, and lowers his dignity in the eyes of God, and of his fellow creatures.

Calamity brings down the loftiness of the human spirit. We have a noted instance of this in the history of Ben-hadad the king of Syria. In the pride of his heart, in girding on his harness, in the confidence of superiority, he sends this insulting message to the king of Israel; "Thus saith Ben-hadad, thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest are mine." Unmollified by submission, he assumes a still haughtier tone, and proceeds to take by violence what had been quietly yielded to him. But brought to himself by a total defeat of his formidable army, he lowers his tone and humbles himself to the man whom he had insulted: servants with sackcloth girded on their loins, and ropes upon their heads, "came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy *servant* Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live," a confirmation of the truth of the wise man's observation: "Pride goeth before destruction: and a haughty spirit before a fall." We would not be thought to insinuate that pride is an inseparable concomitant of greatness, or insolence, of a prosperous condition. But the flattery of inferiours, and the constant means of self-gratification, acting habitually on a principle radically corrupt, have, without doubt, a very dangerous tendency to mislead the understanding, and to corrupt the heart: adversity dispels the illusion, and tells a man feelingly what he is. But for the indisposition of his son, the father might have remained a slave to the world, and died a martyr to the pride of life, and a stranger to the Saviour of mankind. Blessed is that dispensation, be it ever so severe, which loosens a man from the things of time, which empties him of self, which leads him to God.



The faith of this nobleman, as in every case, was blendid with much infirmity. He reposed confidence in the goodness of Christ, in the power of Christ to heal the sick ; but he weakly imagined that this power could operate only on the spot. Under this impression he travels from Capernaum to Cana in hope of being able to persuade Jesus to accompany him to the former city, and stand over the patient, and rebuke the fever, and restore him to health : “ he besought him that he would come down, and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.” He urges the importance of despatch, lest death should interpose and extinguish hope for ever; for his faith carried him no farther than to the brink of the grave, and there gave up all for lost. It was meet that one who thought, who felt, who acted so well, should be taught to think, to feel, to act better. It was meet he should be taught not to dictate to divine sovereignty, but to adore, and submit to it; taught to enlarge his ideas of the power and grace of the redeemer, as extending to universal space, and to every possible state of things. This seems to be the only rational interpretation which can be given of the apparent coldness of the reception given him by our Lord. Instead of his usual promptitude to fly to the relief of distress, the importunate and solicitous father meets, from the lips of Christ, with a seemingly ungracious reflection which had nearly chilled his heart. “ Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” In his progress through Samaria Christ had found greater faith than in Judea. The Samaritans exacted no sign, expressed no suspicion, insisted on no condition. “ Many more believed because of his own *word*, and said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” But his countrymen of Galilee, though they had been witnesses



of his miracles, were "slow of heart to believe." They demand farther evidence, and in the true spirit of Thomas, one of the twelve, who, after all the signs and wonders of which he had been a spectator, resisted the clearest testimony: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." The nobleman of Capernaum had probably expressed himself in similar terms, and thereby incurred this reproof of his incredulity which seemed to convey a denial of his suit.

Parental affection perseveres in following up his request. He tacitly admits the justice of Christ's censure, but waves discussion, and in the anguish of his soul renews his supplication to him, to whom misery never applied in vain: "Sir, come down ere my child die." Where the heart is deeply interested the "words are few," but O how forcible! The feelings of a parent are seen with approbation by the friend of mankind, who knows what is in man, and to whom nothing that affects humanity can be a matter of indifference. "Jesus saith unto him, Go, thy way; thy son liveth." That word, that one little word, has in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, reached Capernaum, has expelled a mortal distemper, has relieved, a wretched father from a pressure under which he was sinking, and has inspired him with a confidence never more to be shaken. He receives his son as one alive from the dead, he learns to correct his false ideas of the power of Christ, and to submit implicitly to his decisions. "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

The sequel unfolds an amiable, interesting and instructive view of domestic life. When the master left his home to go in quest of relief to his child, the servants of the family, some of them actually slaves, entering into their lord's feelings, tend the sick bed of



the young man with all the attention and solicitude of humble friends, not with the eye-service of mercenary or compelled drudges. They observe every symptom of the disorder, they watch over every motion of the patient, they outrun his wants and wishes, they tremble for the issue, they mark with transport the moment of convalescence, and to spare the tender parent every unnecessary pang of painful apprehension, instead of waiting for his return, they send off a deputation of their number, the instant that the fever came to a crisis, to announce the welcome tidings to their beloved master. What honour does this reflect on all the parties! Human life consists of reciprocation of kind affections, expressions and actions, or their contraries. In vain does the unfeeling, insolent, tyrannical despot expect dutiful, cheerful, cordial attachment and submission from domestics and dependants. By failure in his own duty, he has set them the example of harshness, want of sympathy, and disrespect. The inferiour almost always takes the tone from his superiour. If you see obsequious, faithful, diligent servants, or attentive, dutiful, affectionate children, rest assured that the master and mistress of the family, that the parents of the children are wise, gentle and good. Most families in the metropolis, especially those of high rank, are uncomfortable, because mutual attachment subsists not between the rulers and the ruled. It is a mere intercourse of accommodation and interest, in which neither the heart nor conscience hath any part. The paltry consideration of a month's wages settles the account on either side. In the remoter parts of the kingdom, the relation of master and servant is a tacit compact of unlimited duration. The servant is adopted into the family, and looks up to the heads of it with filial respect, gratitude and confidence. No separate interest, no divided or contradictory views and pursuits disturb domestic tranquillity. The family of this nobleman was not far from the kingdom of God, for the



spirit of love was its governing principle, and God is love. “And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”

One of our highest mental pleasures consists in comparing object with object, in order to discover coincidence, similitude, difference or contrast. This pleasure must have been enjoyed in singular purity on this joyful occasion. The distance of the two cities was well known. It employed a whole day, and the exertions of a man of rank and fortune, furnished with all the means of expeditious travelling, and under the stimulus of paternal affection, to go from Capernaum to Cana. How pleasant was it to compare that distance, and the usual rate of journeying, with the inconceivable rapid transition of the word of Christ! what a contrast! Here then was a demonstration of the controlling power of Christ over space; it was not needful that he should go up or come down, that he should be on the same spot with the object of his beneficence, for the purpose of effecting a cure. The divine attribute of omnipresence was accordingly displayed. The measurements of time are equally well known and understood; and there was a peculiarly powerful motive on both sides to mark the precise moment. Here an opportunity was afforded of instituting a second comparison, and lo, what a coincidence between the time of the father's observation and that of the servants, that is, when Jesus spake the word to the one, and when the others perceived a sensible change to the better, in their young master's health! If ever the relation of cause and effect existed, it was in this case. And here was a display of another divine attribute, time as well as space subdued to the will of him who fil-



leth all space ; whose existence was before time began to flow, and runneth through the whole extent of its duration ; with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years ; who measureth the lapse of moments and of ages by a standard unalterable as the ordinances of heaven, and by a standard still more intelligible, sensible, interesting and endearing, uninterrupted, unwearied acts of loving kindness and tender mercies."

It would be ungenerous and unjust to ascribe the nobleman's minuteness of inquiry to doubt, or slowness of belief, for the history expressly saith, "the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and went his way," confiding entirely in the truth and faithfulness of that word, long before the evidence of it met him on the road. But that Jesus in whom he trusted, graciously gave him this confirmation of his faith, that he might feel the solidity of the rock on which all his hope rested. Faith is faith though but as a grain of mustard-seed ; for that grain contains an immortal germ, pregnant with all the beauty and richness of a future harvest. The apostles themselves were sometimes weak, at other times strong in the faith ; sensible of this they prayed unto the Lord that he would "increase" it. The principle is sound, it is vital : it may lie dormant, it may suffer depression, but it cannot expire. "So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, thy son liveth ; and himself believed, and his whole house."

The miracles of Christ always look farther than to their immediate object. Application is made for the removal of a bodily infirmity ; the diseases of the mind are at the same time reached by the healing power of the redeemer, and the spectators are made sensible of a divine energy. The blind man comes in hope of having his sight restored, he goes away seeing, and



with the unspeakably greater blessing, the eyes of his understanding opened. Behold that helpless paralytic, "borne of four," stretched motionless on his couch. At the word of Christ he recovers strength, arises, takes up his bed, goes forth before them all, and departs to his house, not only with a body every whit whole but with a soul relieved from the dreadful pressure of the guilt of sin; "Jesus said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Mark these ten lepers, outcasts from society, loathsome to themselves, an abomination to others, labouring under a malady which medicine could not reach; they stand afar off, they lift up their voices, they cry for mercy. As they went at the command of Christ, to shew themselves to the priests, they were cleansed. To nine of the ten it proved a mere temporary relief, a corporal purgation; the fatal leprosy of sin remained to defile the conscience. To the tenth, a stranger, a Samaritan, it proved at once the cure of bodily disease and of mental pollution: "and one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Illustrious to the same purpose is the history of miracle under review. The nearer and more immediate object is a sick child at Capernaum, restored instantaneously from threatening indisposition to perfect soundness. But consider how many momentous circumstances are involved in that one object. The father was a person of the very first distinction, connected with the higher powers of this world, at the head of a numerous and well ordered household, a man of urbanity, understanding and address. Converted him.



self to the faith of the gospel, behold him disposed to employ the whole weight of his influence, of his authority, of his example, in promoting the cause which he himself had from conviction embraced. Incalculable is the effect which one man of character, talents and virtue may produce in a court, a city, a kingdom, a world. No one can be solitarily either good or wicked. The contagion whether of virtue or vice is quickly caught and communicated, with this difference, that in the one case there is a repulsive faculty that guards the system against admission of the gracious principle, and which therefore needs to be corrected, whereas in the other there is a predisposition to absorb the poison, which it requires no common skill and attention to prevent. Whatever might be the more remote, or more extensive influence of this good man's faith and piety, the evangelist informs us that it embraced at least the whole of his own family: "and himself believed and his whole house." Here was another province, by a strong hand rent from the empire of Satan and added to the kingdom of the Messiah; "for he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet."

We conclude with a few practical reflections suggested by this portion of our blessed Lord's history.

1. Events, to our apprehension, casual, ordinary, merely things of course, are, in the purpose of the Eternal Mind, order, connection mutual dependence. Our eyes are too feeble to discern how delicately fine the hinges are on which the mighty machinery of heaven moves. The enterprizes of man exhibit the noise and bustle of preparation, and violence of exertion, and lo, they come to nothing; they commence in a blaze, and presently issue in smoke. The designs of the Most High have, from imperceptible beginnings, made a silent, unnoticed progress, and have acquired strength irresistible before attention was excited; they issue from a dark cloud, and advance with growing



lustre unto the perfect day. What more common than sickness in a numerous family? Uniform health, not occasional disease, is the wonder. The malady of a beloved child spreads a sable veil over an honourable house; it threatens to embitter the future days of survivors; the hand of death is lifted up to strike the decisive blow. It is a critical moment. The Lord gives the word. The child lives, the parent believes, the whole house is converted unto the Lord, an impression favourable to christianity is made on the public mind, the dominion of grace is extended, and the kingdom of glory opens to view. From such a hidden source, inaccessible as that of the Nile, issues the majestic river destined to adorn and fertilize distant regions and the nations which inhabit them. This day salvation came to the house of that nobleman. It wore a lowering aspect, but it brightened as it went.

2. Mark the impartial regards of the great Lord of all to his creatures of every order and condition. With some men there is a strong prejudice in favour of nobility and affluence, as if they implied greatness, generosity, capacity. Others are actuated by a prejudice equally violent and unreasonable against them. Wisdom says, look to the man, and not to his circumstances. Goodness is the object of commendation and esteem, whether in the high or the low, the rich or the poor; and vice is odious whatever be the condition of life. A righteous judge considereth the cause, not the rank and character of the parties.—And lest there should be an improper bias to the side of poverty, as there sometimes is to the side of wealth, the law very wisely throws in this caution: “Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.” Our Lord sets the example of this impartiality. Nobility could be no recommendation to his favour, neither was it any bar in the way. The dis-



tress, the importunity, the parental affection of the man moved his compassion, the current of which could not be impeded by the consideration of his being a courtier. It is a melancholy reflection, "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called;" but it is pleasing to reflect that the rule is not absolute and universal. The history of the christian church and the state of the world at this day, exhibit many glorious instances of the triumph of divine grace over the fascination of high rank, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pride of life. As such persons had more to combat and to overcome than others, the combat and the conquest redound the more to the glory of God, in whose strength they overcome.

3. We have before us an example of high moral virtue, existing without a principle of saving faith. This nobleman adorned his exalted station by qualities estimable in whatever rank. He ruled well his own house. He was an affectionate parent, and a kind master. And when we behold a man fulfilling the duties of one relation reputably to himself and usefully to others, we are bound in charity to believe, that he acts worthily in the other relations of life. When an instance of this kind presents itself, it excites regret that such a one though "not far from the kingdom of God," should nevertheless come short. It is a religion that confers dignity on high birth, and that gives energy to virtue. If then this man were respectable and exemplary by his virtuous conduct, how much more so is he, when faith is added to virtue, now that a divine principle sanctifies, animates, ennobles every action, and renders ordinary employments not only a reasonable but a religious service. Morality, then, may exist without religion, but there can be no religion without morality. "Faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone:" "for as the



body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." If in his mere civil and moral capacity the nobleman of Capernaum administered his affairs so wisely and so well, what must have been the ardour of natural affection, his discretion in the management of his household, the propriety of his personal deportment, now that his understanding is illuminated, and his heart warmed, and the path of his feet guided, by the sacred flame of religion! now that "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation had appeared to him, teaching" him, as it does all its subjects, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

4. Do we feel parental solicitude about the bodily health, and the mental improvement, and the worldly prosperity of our children? What then ought to be the fervour of our spirits at a throne of grace, to obtain for them an interest in the favour of God, the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation, the spirit of sanctification, a right to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" From their relation to us they derive pollution, guilt, condemnation and death; and shall not we be stimulated to repair the injury we have done them; and, by nurture, by example, by prayer and supplication, become the instruments of making them "partakers of the divine nature," and of raising them to the rank of "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Wo unto them, and unto us, unless they are adopted into a nobler family, and exalted to higher privileges, than those to which the birth of nature entitles them; and unless they "receive the Spirit of



adoption, whereby they may cry, Abba, Father." What will it be to present ourselves, at length, and our offspring, whether after the flesh, or after the spirit, or both in one, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, saying, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me!" Let this prospect direct our wishes, dictate our prayers, animate our exertions, till, with Israel, we have power with God and with men, and prevail.

5. Finally, In the presence of that God with whom we have to do, and of Jesus, "who is God over all, and blessed for ever," all space shrinks into a span, all duration into a moment. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Realize that awful omnipresence as a guard upon the heart, upon the tongue, upon the life; as a ground of hope and a source of joy in every dark and trying hour. "God is a very present help in trouble." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." He is faithful who hath promised, to his Israel whom he hath created, whom he hath formed, whom he hath redeemed, whom he hath called by name. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Are "a thousand years in his sight but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night?" And do "we spend our years as a tale that is told?" "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." There is no commodity which men trifle with so sadly, when they have it at command, as time; and no one the loss of which they so bitterly deplore, when it is in their power



no longer. Account every instant critical and decisive, for undoubtedly many are so. Remember that ye are the disciples of him who saith of himself; "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XXII.

*And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, and Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, go, and he goeth, and to another, come and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said to them that followed, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.—Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And*



*when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this : for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself ; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof : wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee : but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers ; and I say unto one go, and he goeth : and to another, come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And they that were sent returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.—MAT. viii. 5—12, and LUKE vii. 1—10.*

**T**HE various orders of men which exist in society are a demonstration that society is in a very imperfect and corrupt state. Restore everlasting and universal peace to a troubled world, and the profession of a soldier is at an end. There were then no “ battle of the warrior with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood.” While injustice, violence and cruelty are in the world, there must be tribunals, and prisons, and scaffolds. The ravages of disease, and the thousand accidents to which human life is exposed, render necessary the interposition of the healing art. When the time of the restitution of all things shall come the office of public instructor shall cease. “ They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord ; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”



To this blessed consummation we are encouraged to look forward, when the spirit of love shall absorb the flame of discord, and make the sword drop from the hand of the man of war; when the courts shall be shut and the prison-doors thrown open, because fraud and violence are no more; when, in the beautifully figurative language of the prophet, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Certain professions, it has been alleged, have in their very nature a corruptive quality. That of the military man is supposed to be of this number. The vulgar associate with it the ideas of insolence, ferocity, licentiousness, and of other hateful qualities. Like every other general censure, this too must be taken with many grains of allowance, and candour must admit that there are excellent men of every profession; and, in the case of illustrious exceptions from the generality of the stigmatized orders, higher praise is undoubtedly due to those who have the courage to resist, and strength to overcome the temptations to which their manner of life, and the very means of earning their subsistence expose them, than to persons who had no such difficulties to encounter. Of this description are the nobleman, and the Roman centurion of Capernaum. The history of the former, as far as connected with that of our blessed Lord, was the subject of the last lecture, that of the latter is now to be the ground of our meditation. The two person-



ages present a striking resemblance to each other, in their personal character, in their condition of life, in the circumstances which brought them acquainted with the Saviour of the world. They dwelt in the same city, perhaps in habits of intimacy, for the good naturally attract and associate with the good; the one a courtier, the other an officer of very considerable rank; both, men of humanity, of gentle manners, of amiable, of noble deportment; the one a suppliant in behalf of a darling child, labouring under an attack of the fever, the other in behalf of a favourite servant, attacked by a violent paralytic affection; both successful in their application, and both deeply impressed with the character of their great benefactor. With so many marks of resemblance, the two little histories display a lovely, affecting and instructive variety, tending to unfold the various shades of the human mind, in the changing scenes of human life, and equally tending to illustrate the grace and power of Christ, ever ready to meet every case, adapted alike to the relief of the bodies and of the souls of men.

The person who applied to Jesus Christ on this occasion was a centurion, that is, as the word imports, an officer in the Roman army who had a hundred men under his command. It corresponded nearly to the rank of captain in our military establishment. Judea was at this time a conquered province, in subjection to the authority of a Roman governor, and kept in awe by Roman soldiery. The Jews vainly boasted that they were "Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man:" whereas it was notorious to the whole world that from the days of Egyptian bondage, down to the despotism of Tiberius Cæsar, their intervals of liberty had been few, transient and interrupted? and at that very moment they were murmuring under the pressure of a galling yoke, imposed on their neck, and kept there, by the strong hand of power; and Jesus Christ convicts them of being in subjection to a yoke still



more galling and disgraceful : “ whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” But such are the self-delusions which men practise. Every Roman soldier who was seen, every Roman coin that circulated through the land demonstrated that they were not a free people. Indeed they were not worthy to be so, for they never enjoyed liberty without abusing it. Happy was it for the district of Capernaum to be under a government so mild and moderate as that of this good centurion.

The two evangelists who have recorded this fact differ in some circumstances of their narration. In reading St. Matthew’s account we are led to suppose that the centurion made personal application to Christ, for the cure of his servant, whereas in the more circumstantial account of the transaction, transmitted to us by St. Luke, we find that the application was made in the first instance, through the medium of “ the elders of the Jews.” But there is no real difference between the two historians. It was a maxim among the Jews, “ a man’s proxy is the man himself,” and it is still a rule among civilians, “ What we do by another we are adjudged to have done ourselves.” In a process of law, a party is said to come into court, and to have made such representation, though he appeared only by his counsel or solicitor. Thus Jethro came to Moses first by a messenger, with these words in his mouth ; “ I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two children.” On receiving this message, Moses went out to enjoy a personal interview with his family. Thus Solomon sent ambassadors to Hiram, who were to address him not in the plural number, but in the first person singular, as if Solomon himself had spoken the words face to face ; “ behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God ;” and Hiram fairly considers himself as “ hearing the words of Solomon.” Thus the two sons of Zebedee came to Christ, with



a petition, through the medium of their mother ; and thus John Baptist, now shut up in a prison, addressed himself to Jesus by two of his disciples, saying, “ Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another.” Matthew, in conformity to this mode of speech and thought, represents the centurion as coming in person to Christ, though at first, through modesty and humility, he thought proper to employ the intercession of others.

We have here a singularly pleasant opening into a good mind. This man was accustomed to command, not to supplicate, to dictate not to bend. But such is his veneration for the person and character of Christ, that he is awed at the thought of appearing in his presence ; instead of resorting to the exercise of authority, he has recourse to entreaty, and hopes from the interposition of men better than himself what he dared not to ask on his own account. Does this bring his courage under suspicion ? Is it likely that such a man would turn his back in the day of battle ? No, surely. It is the coward that struts, and boasts, and threatens ; the truly brave are modest, gentle and unassuming ; they speak by their actions, not by high swelling words of vanity. And yet this centurion had more than one plea of merit to advance. He had borne his faculties most meekly in his great office. He had not oppressed, he had not been guilty of extortion ; and even this negative virtue merits some degree of commendation. On the contrary he cherished, encouraged, protected the people whom he was sent to rule. Instead of restricting their religious liberty, or permitting their worship to be disturbed, he liberally contributed toward the maintenance of public worship, and most probably assisted at it. In a word, he was a public blessing. Men generally set the full value on the good actions which they perform, and are frequently at pains to make an ostentatious display of them. He puts in no claim, exacts no acknowledgment, expects no re-



turn. The elders of the Jews feel themselves so much the more called upon to celebrate his good qualities, and to enumerate his benefits. “ They came to Jesus and besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this ; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. If indeed he had become a proselyte to the Jewish religion, that is, a worshipper of the one living and true God, as, from the whole history taken together, there is little reason to doubt a still higher degree of respectability attaches to his character. What obstacles had he not to surmount, what prejudices to overcome ! The prejudice of education in the religion of polytheism, or a plurality of Gods ; the prejudice of profession, which sometimes makes it a point of honour to be of no religion, sometimes to adhere to the first adopted ; political prejudice, which would have tied him down to the religion of the imperial court, the source of all civil and military preferment ; and more than all these, he had to encounter the formidable laugh of the world, the raillery of his fellow officers, the sneer of witlings. The courage that could meet and overcome such discouragements is indeed the courage of a hero.

It is now time to inquire into the object of this circuitous expostulation. What point is to be carried ? what interest is at stake to warrant such earnestness and importunity ? a servant sick of the palsy, and ready to die. The word translated a *servant*, through the whole of St. Matthew’s narration, signifies *boy*, a term of ambiguous meaning, being employed to denote either *child* or *servant*, and it determines the age only, not the quality of the patient. But the Greek word used by St. Luke, except in one clause, is of unequivocal import, and indeed reduces the young man’s condition lower than that of servant, for it means *slave*, and expresses the lowest condition of human wretchedness. This young person might have been



either a prisoner of war, or purchased with money; and slaves of both descriptions were frequently endowed with rare accomplishments. As Providence permitted the boy to sink into this degraded state, it was some compensation, that he fell into the hands of a kind and affectionate master, a man of principle, a man of humanity. Where is now the ferociousness, the insensibility, the indifference of the soldier? All melts into sympathy with distress, and into a sense of mutual obligation. Thus it is that the God who made us, who “knoweth our frame, and who remembereth that we are dust,” balances evil with good, and either finds a way to escape, or administers strength to support the calamity. Thus necessary to each other are the members in both the social and the natural body. “If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

The case of the little slave was dangerous if not desperate. The palsy is a partial death of the limbs affected. Here it was a privation of motion, while acute sensibility remained, he was “grievously tormented;” and this combination of pain and interrupted circulation threatened approaching dissolution. But the maxim is excellent both in medicine and morals: “While there is life there is hope,” and religion advances a step farther, and says, “Even in death there is hope.” Many a promising case has been lost through impatience and despair. Till Providence has decided, man is bound to persevere in the use of means. It is evident that the centurion expected every thing from the sovereign power, and not from the personal presence of Christ; and herein his faith soared much higher than that of the nobleman, who



had no idea of a cure effected at a distance from the object. But how shall we account for the cold, repulsive reception given to the personal solicitation of the nobleman ; “ except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe ;” and for the frank and cheerful compliance with the centurion’s message, “ I will come and heal him ?” Jesus will have his sovereignty felt and acknowledged in all thing. Humility and self-abasement are the most powerful claims of a suppliant, and the sublimer faith has the superior power with God and prevails.

Instead of being transported with joy at the thought of this proffered visit, the centurion shrinks from the approach of Christ. A sense of guilt and unworthiness stares him in the face. The presence of a personage so pure, so exalted, he feels himself unable to support, and deputed other friends to meet Jesus, to renew his suit, but to deprecate the degradation of his dignified character, by conversing with one so mean as himself, and by coming under a roof so unworthy to receive such a guest. Finding however that Jesus drew nigher and nigher, he at length assumes resolution, and goes forth himself to meet him, with a heart overwhelmed, overflowing, and a mouth filled with arguments. Never did imagination conceive, never did heart feel, never did tongue express a strain of reasoning more forcible, more affecting, more sublime. “ The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof : but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh ; and to my servant do this, and he doeth it.” The knowledge which he had of his own profession is the foundation of his argument. In a military establishment, all must be cheerful subordination and prompt obedience. He himself was at once under au-



thority, and in authority. He had not the idea of disputing the commands of his superior, and he knew that his word, that his nod was a law to his inferiors. Under this notion of military discipline he contemplates the supreme authority of Christ as extending to all persons, elements and events. His own orders were obeyed, though his person were at a distance and unseen. What then should retard the execution of a will which all the powers of nature are unable to resist? "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled," not as an ordinary man wonders at something new, striking and uncommon. He knew what was in man. The marvellous faith which he graciously pleased to approve and to reward was the operation of his own spirit; but he holds it up as a matter of wonder to all who were present, and as a subject of reproof to those of the house of Israel, who, with all their superior advantages, possessing as they did, "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came:" nevertheless received their promised, their expected Messiah coldly, doubtingly, reluctantly; and at length utterly rejected him, and put him to death. This leads our blessed Lord to unfold the approaching admission of the Gentile nations into the church of God, by believing and embracing his gospel, and the rejection of the posterity of Abraham after the flesh, because of their unbelief: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus delivers this all-important doctrine under the solemnity of an "I say unto



you ;” “mark me well ; my words are true and faithful, they are serious and interesting, they concern every one among you, they shall all have their accomplishment.” The assembly to whom this was addressed, consisted of a great variety of persons. It was composed of the elders of the Jews, who had come to intercede in behalf of their benefactor, and who were waiting the issue ; of the centurion himself, originally a Gentile and an idolater ; of the friends whom he had dispatched to meet Jesus, who were likewise in all probability Roman soldiers, and of course heathens and idolaters ; and of a mixed multitude who followed Christ wherever he went. The highest privilege which proselyted Gentiles could obtain from Jewish bigotry was permission to worship the true God in the outer court of the temple, which was appropriated to them, and called by their name. To them how grateful must have been the intimation of being made partakers of all the privileges of the sons of God ! of rising to their full and equal rank in the great family of the common Father of all, of being admitted into the society, and of enjoying the felicity of the venerable founders of the Jewish church, a branch only of “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven !” The precious faith which exalted the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to a place in the kingdom of God, was to be diffused in every direction, and to raise men “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” to the “inheritance of a kingdom prepared,” for all the faithful, “from the foundation of the world.” The Jews, on the other hand, valued themselves on their exclusive privileges. They scorned to have any dealings with even their neighbours and brethren the Samaritans. They held themselves contaminated by coming into contact with the impure heathen ; they appropriated to themselves a right to the favour of God. To per-



sons labouring under such prejudices, which had been instilled into them with their mothers' milk, what an awful denunciation was it, that not only should the Gentile nations be received within the pale of the church, but received to their own exclusion? "Behold," exclaims the apostle, in contemplating this very object, "Behold the goodness and severity of God." "Of a truth we perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." But the singular imagery, and the very language by which thier view of the Redeemer's kingdom is conveyed, deserve a particular consideration. May they be deeply impressed upon our hearts and minds.

"*Many*, shall come," says Christ as he surveyed the gradual progress, and the unlimited extent of his empire. The narrow spirit of Judaism is not peculiar to that people. It seems to be a general character of human nature. Abraham and Lot were under the necessity of separating, because "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together." How often has a well of water kindled a flame among brethren! Whence come pride and envy? whence come fraud and cunning? whence come wars and fighting? whence come monopolies and exclusions, but from the selfishness of an individual, or of a few, to appropriate to themselves what belongs to many? Were the operation of this spirit confined to the things of time, it might be accounted for. The desires of the human mind are unbounded, and the objects of pursuit are few and small. What another acquires seems to be so much taken away from me. Though in truth there is provision sufficiently ample for all; bread enough and to spare, room enough and to spare, were the real wants and the reasonable wishes of nature to settle the distribution. But that the kingdom of heaven should be



subjected to a monopoly; that its keys should be seized by the bold hand of an usurping individual or of an arrogant party, would exceed belief, did not the history even of the christian church establish the fact. The disciples of Christ themselves brought into his school all the contratedness of their Jewish education. Even the mild and affectionate John was tainted with it. "Master," said he, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name: and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." They are for calling down fire from heaven to consume a whole village of Samaritans, in resentment of a mere piece of incivility. They must have the highest places when their master should come to the throne. The kingdom must be restored to Israel, whatever might become of the rest of the world. This spirit, though frequently and severely reprobated by their benevolent master, has unhappily been transmitted, and mutual anathemas and excommunications have been thundered by furious sectaries, who have one after another desolated the earth, to secure to themselves the undivided possession of a heaven which they are incapable of enjoying. If the Saviour of men says, "*many* shall come," who dares to limit the holy One of Israel, and to say, "*few* shall be saved?"

"Many shall come from the *east and west*." The other two cardinal points are specified in a corresponding passage of the gospel according to St. Luke, chap. xiii. 29. The import of the expression is obvious. It denotes the attractive influence of Christianity over men of every region under heaven, and the universal paternal care and love of Him who "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," The day of Pentecost exhibited the first fruits of this glorious harvest. When the apostles, "filled with the Holy Ghost, spake with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance," "there were dwell-



ing at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome. Jews and proselytes.”—“and the same day there was added unto them about three thousand souls.” Since that period what have been the triumphs of the Prince of Peace! What myriads are now prostrate before Him who sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb, adoring the wonders of redeeming grace, looking, with angels, into the great mystery of godliness, if haply they “may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!” And what still more glorious triumphs remain to be displayed, when “the *fulness* of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel shall be saved,” when “great voices in heaven” shall say “The kingdom of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The multitudes who shall flock to the Saviour, as doves to their windows, from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, as they are partakes of the faith of the patriarchs, so they shall at length be made partakers of their joy; “they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.” What an assemblage of delicious images!



What prospects has the gospel opened to the children of men ! Those travellers into a far country have returned to their Father's house. They pursued various tracks, but all led homeward. They were strangers to each other in a strange land, but the prevailing family likeness now lets them see that they are brothers. They sometimes fell out by the way, but now there is perfect love. They had heard of the names of their venerable ancestors and respectable kindred, now they see, and know, and rejoice in them. Their pilgrimage is ended, their "warfare is accomplished."

"They shall *sit* down." They were laid in the grave, they fell asleep, they saw corruption. Now they are children of the resurrection ; refreshed by the sleep of death, they have acquired immortal vigour, they have put on incorruption. Sitting is the posture assumed for the enjoyment of social intercourse, and that is the idea here conveyed. The family is assembled, the banquet is prepared, perfect harmony reigns. When men return to the bosom of their friends from tedious and painful journeys, from perilous voyages, from destructive warfare, affection suggests many an inquiry, many a communication. Alas, how often do we fondly anticipate the communications of distant friends who are never to return ! But of the expected guests, of the innumerable company invited to "the marriage of the Lamb," not one shall be missing, no bitter recollection shall intrude, no painful apprehension shall arise. And with what subjects of conversation are they eternally supplied ! With what enlarged views of those subjects do they discourse ! The glories of nature are contemplated with new eyes, and excite emotions before unfeelt. The mystery of Providence, once so intricate and inscrutable, is unravellered : the mighty plan, the minute parts, the universal and the individual interest are found in perfect unison. The



wonders of redeeming love, intermingling with the glories of creation and the mystery of Providence, communicating to them all their beauty, all their importance. What a theme for the whole company of the redeemed, for interchange of personal experience, for mutual congratulation and delight ! What exalted employment, what inexhaustable source of joy for the endless days of eternity !

“They shall sit down with *Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.*” There is a natural desire in man to be in the company of the eminently great, and wise, and good. But this desire is tempered by a consciousness of our own inferiority. We shrink from the penetrating eye of wisdom, we feel “how awful goodness is,” we blush inwardly at the thought of our own littleness. But those in-gathered outcasts from the east and west feel no uneasy apprehensions on being introduced to society so dignified, for “there is no fear in love.” They indeed feel their inferiority, but it excites no mortification. They are in their proper place, and they have their proper measure of glory. While time was, they pronounced these venerable names with awe, they account those persons happy who could claim kindred to men so highly distinguished, admission to the court of the Gentiles terminated their ambition, birth had excluded them for ever from the commonwealth of Israel. Now they find that they are the real posterity of Abraham, “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” If any man hath not the spirit of Abraham, he is none of his. By the spirit they are related to the father of the faithful, and he joyfully acknowledges them as his children, and heirs with him of the promises.

“They shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, *in the kingdom of heaven.*” This implies a participation of all the privileges of saints on earth, communion and fellowship with one another, as mem-



bers together of that body whereof Christ is the head, and joint “fellowship with the Father, and with the son Jesus Christ.” Such is the kingdom of God in this world, and such the preparation for the inheritance of saints in light, for the kingdom which cannot be moved. Let us not presume to “darken counsel by words without knowledge.” Let us not presume to draw aside the veil which separates a material world from the world of spirits, which interposes between time and eternity. Scripture itself, after exhausting every image, every idea of negative and of positive glory and felicity, as descriptive of “the kingdom of heaven,” refers us to a future revelation of that glory. Paul “caught up to the third heaven, caught up into paradise,” admitted to the intercourse of celestial beings, and sent back to earth, finds himself incapable of describing the heavenly vision. The words which he heard were unspeakable, which it is not lawful, which it is not possible for a man to utter. In this blessed, undefined, undescribed state we leave it : “It is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

The contrast is dreadful : “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out in outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” By “the children of the kingdom,” our Lord undoubtedly means to denote the posterity of Abraham after the flesh, the original heirs of the promises, the depositaries of the covenants, who, with all the advantages of birth, of education, of a revelation which they acknowledged to be divine, and of which they made their boast, obstinately rejected the promised Messiah, to whom all their prophets give witness ; who, valuing themselves upon, and vainly resting in, a mere natural descent from illustrious ancestors, without inheriting a particle of their spirit, wilfully excluded themselves from the kingdom of heaven. Their means of knowledge, their peculiar



privileges were a horrid aggravation of their guilt, and a full justification of their tremendous punishment. The blessedness of the righteous, in the heavenly world, is, in the preceding verse, represented under the well-known and familiar image of the banquet, or marriage feast, and various passages of the gospel history throw light upon the allusion, particularly the parable of the ten virgins. Those solemnities were usually celebrated in the night season. The apartments destined to the entertainment of the guests were superbly illuminated. The bridegroom and his train came to the banqueting house in magnificent procession, by lamps or torched light. The invited guests were admitted through the wicket, to prevent promiscuous intrusion. As soon as the nuptial band had entered the doors were shut. The careless and the tardy were of course excluded, and no after expostulation or entreaty could procure admittance; they were left in *outer* darkness, rendered more hideous by comparison with the splendour which reigned within; left, in the cold and damps of the night, to their own bitter reflections, dreadfully aggravated by the idea of a felicity to them for ever inaccessible. By a representation so powerfully impressive, so easily understood, so awfully alarming, were the elders of the Jews admonished of the guilt, danger and misery of rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, of refusing the testimony which God had given to his Son Christ Jesus.

After this very solemn digression, Jesus returns to the subject which had given rise to it, the servant's malady, and the master's marvellous faith. He bestows a present reward on the one, by instantly relieving the other. "And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way; and as thou has believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour." Here the Saviour condescends to be dictated to. He yields to the prayer of a faith so very extraordinary, he proceeds no farther on his way to the



centurion's house. The petition runs, "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;" he speaks the word, he wills the cure, and virtue goes out of him to perform it.

Neither of the evangelists pursue the history of the centurion farther. But we have every thing to hope, every thing to believe of a man who so eminently distinguished himself as an excellent soldier, a kind master, a moderate ruler, a pious worshipper of God, and an humble but firm believer in Jesus Christ. In his history the christian world has to boast of another of the triumphs of the captain of salvation, of another successful invasion of Satan's kingdom, of another display of divine perfection in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not unworthy of remark that various persons of the same rank and profession, that of centurion, stand with high marks of approbation on the sacred page. Next to this most respectable character, we find another employed on a very trying occasion. He, with the company under his command, was appointed to see the sentence of crucifixion executed, for soldiers are put upon many a painful service, and he was not an unconcerned spectator of that awful scene. "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God." The name of Cornelius of Cesarea, the centurion of the Italian band, is renowned in all the churches of Christ, as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." He is farther honourably reported by those of his own household, as "a just man, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews." The centurion who had charge of Paul and the other prisoners, on the disastrous voyage which terminated in shipwreck on the island of Melita, paid singular attention to the apostle, followed his advice, and spared the rest of the



prisoners that he might preserve Paul's life. And upon their arrival at Rome, when this generous officer delivered over the rest of his charge to the captain of the guard, he had sufficient credit and ability to express his friendship for our apostle, by procuring for him a greater enlargement of liberty : " Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."

From this interesting story let us learn,

1. To despise no man's person, feelings, opinions, profession or country. His person is what God made it, and he makes nothing that is in itself contemptible. You are bound in equity to respect the feelings of another, for you wish that your own should not be handled rudely. It ill becomes one who has himself formed so many erroneous opinions, and veered about so frequently with the flitting gale, to prescribe a standard of opinion to other men. Unless a profession be radically, and in its own nature sinful, those who follow it ought not to be condemned in the lump; if it expose to peculiar temptations to act amiss, he who resists the temptation and overcomes himself is the more estimable. Over the place of his birth a man had no more power than over the height of his stature or the colour of his skin. It is an object of neither praise nor blame. The apostle Peter received a severe and just rebuke on this head, by a vision from heaven. He was prepared, and he needed to be prepared, for the exercise of his ministry at Cesarea, and to the family and friends of this excellent Roman centurion already mentioned, and whom his Jewish pride had taught him to hold in contempt, by a thrice repeated mandate which he dared not to disobey : " What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Let us consider it is addressed to ourselves. " Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall not stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."



2. The fearful doom denounced against unbelieving Jews ought to operate as a warning to still more highly privileged christians, lest any man "fall after the same example of unbelief." "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." We sometimes express contempt for the Pagan world sometimes affect to pity the blinded nations, and without hesitation presume to pass a sentence of final condemnation upon them. The unhappy tribes of Africa, in particular, Christian Europe calmly reduces to the condition of beasts of burthen in this world, with hardly an effort to ameliorate in the next. And yet they are men, they possess many virtues which ought to put their tyrants to the blush, and which will one day rise up in judgment against them. We despise the miserable Jews, and stigmatize them as infidels, as if all those who bear the name of Christ actually believed in him. "Boast not against the broken-off branches :"—thou wilt say, the "branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well ; because of unbelief, they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear : for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." I conclude with the solemn denunciation of Christ himself respecting the men of his generation, and which is still in equal force. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it : because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."



# HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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## LECTURE XXIII.

*After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (and this he said to prove him; for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, there is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had*



*seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world—*  
JOHN vi. 1—14.

THE course of nature is a standing miracle. To be an atheist is to cease from being a man. To think of arguing with such a one is to undertake a labour as fruitless as attempting to reason the lunatic into a sound mind. A case like this ought to excite no emotion but compassion, mixed with gratitude to God that he has not reduced us to a condition so deplorable. Refinement in reasoning is, in general, both unprofitable and inconclusive. The man of plain common sense may advantageously observe and devoutly acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of the Great Supreme in the regular ebbing and flowing of the tide, though he cannot trace the process of the sun's action on the waters of the ocean; or of the wind, in conveying the fluid to the mountain's top; or of gravity, sending it down to water the plains beneath; or the supposed influence of the moon, or of the melting of the polar ices, producing an alternate and regular flux and reflux on our shores, or in our rivers. Of what importance is the theory of vegetation, compared to the simple but valuable labour and experience of the gardener and husbandman? The same observation applies to the religion of the gospel. Here the learned have no advantage whatever over the illiterate. It consists of a few plain, unadorned facts, authenticated by the testimony of a cloud of unsuspected witnesses; of a few simple, practical truths, level to the most ordinary capacity; and of a few precepts of self-evident importance, which it highly concerns every man to observe. Should it be alleged that these are blended with things hard to be understood, it is admitted. And here again the wise and prudent have no superiority over the vulgar, but both meet the God of grace as well as the God of nature exercising his divine prero-



gative, in ministering to the necessities, while he checks the pride and presumption of man.

The miracles of our blessed Lord which have hitherto passed in review, had a more limited object. Their design was to relieve individual, or domestic distress ; they were an appeal, public indeed, to the understanding and senses of all who witnessed them, but slightly felt, imperfectly understood, and little improved, except by the parties more immediately interested in them. They were granted to importunity, and as a reward to the prayer of faith. That which is the subject of the passage now read, embraces a much wider range than any of these, and is the spontaneous effusion of his own divine benevolence and compassion. Ten thousand persons, at a moderate calculation, were at once the witness and the subjects of the miracle, and in a case wherein it was impossible they should be mistaken, for they had every sense, every faculty exercised in ascertaining the truth. And here he waits not, as in other cases, till the cry of misery reaches his ear, but advances to meet it, to prevent it ; he outruns expectation, and has a supply in readiness, before the pressure of want is felt.

The duration of Christ's public ministry, from his baptism to his passion, has been calculated from the number of passovers which he frequented. This, as may be supposed, has occasioned considerable variety of opinion. The attentive reader will probably adopt that of our illustrious countryman, Sir Isaac Newton, who reckons five of these annual festivals within the period. The first, that recorded in the 2d chapter of St. John's gospel, at which he purged the temple, predicted his own death and resurrection, and performed sundry miracles. The second, according to that chronologist, took place a few months after our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, which he founds on that text, John iv. 35, " Say not ye, there



are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." The third, a few days prior to the Sabbath on which the disciples walked out into the fields, and plucked the ears of corn, when he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The fourth, that which was now approaching at the æra of this miracle; and the fifth, that at which he suffered. The people were now therefore flocking from all parts of Galilee, on their way to Jerusalem to keep the passover: and this accounts for the very extraordinary number who at this time attended his preaching and miracles.

"After these things," says John. The other three evangelists connect this scene, in respect of time, with a most memorable event in the history of christianity, the decapitation of John Baptist in the prison. When these melancholy tidings were told to Jesus, Matthew informs us, that "he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick;" and then immediately follows the miracle of feeding the multitude, recorded with exactly the same circumstances in all the four evangelists. Mark affixes an additional date. It was at the time when the disciples returned from the execution of their first commission, with an account of their success: "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught." On this Jesus proposed a temporary retirement from the public eye, for the conveniency of private conversation, of repose, and of the necessary refreshment of the body: "And he said unto them, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for



there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately ;” and this, as before, prepared for the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The self-same circumstances are minutely narrated in Luke’s gospel. These mark the precise epoch when Christ went over the sea of Galilee, and retired with the twelve to a mountain in the desert of Bethsaida. But though he went by water, to escape for a season the multitudes which thronged after him, the place of his destination is discovered, and thousands, filled with impatience, admiration, gratitude, hope, outstrip the speed of the vessel, by a circuitous journey along the shore of the lake. Their motives were various. The powerful principle of curiosity attracted many. A thirst of the word of life impelled others. “A great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased,” and many had themselves “need of healing.” An affecting view is exhibited of Christ’s benevolent character. As from the elevation of the mountain he beheld the people pressing forward by thousands to the spot where he was, all thoughts of food, of rest, of accommodation lost in an appetite more dignified and pure, his bowels melted : “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd : and he began to teach them many things.” The sight of a great assembly of men, women and children must ever create a lively interest in every bosom alive to the feelings of humanity. The view of his mighty host melted Xerxes into tears, merely from reflection on their natural mortality. What then are the “bowels and mercies” of the compassionate friend of mankind, on surveying innumerable myriads ready to perish everlastingly for lack of knowledge, dying in their sins ! He feels even for their bodily wants, which, in the ardour of their spirits, they seem to



have themselves forgotten, and a supply is provided before the cravings of nature have found out that it was necessary. And thus a gracious Providence, in things both temporal and spiritual, outruns not only the supplications of the miserable, but their very hopes and desires.

“The day began to wear away,” they were in a desert place, the multitude was prodigiously increased, they had fasted long, no provision of either victuals or lodging had been made, and the adjacent villages promised but a slender accommodation of either, even had there been money to purchase them. A case of truly aggravated distress ! The forethought and sympathy of the disciples went no farther than to suggest the propriety of an immediate dismissal of the assembly, while sufficient light remained to procure what was needful for exhausted nature. “When the day began to wear away then came the twelve, and said unto him, send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals : for we are here in a desert place.” But their gracious master looked much farther, and felt more tenderly. He addresses himself particularly to Philip, who was of the city of Bethsaida, and might be supposed to know the state of the country, and how much it could produce in an emergency of this kind, on the supposition that their stock of money was equal to the demand ; “he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ?” Why the appeal was personally made to Philip, may be accounted for from some peculiarity in that disciple’s character. He appears to have been one of those who slowly, suspiciously, reluctantly admitted the evidence of their master’s divine mission ; for we find him, long after this, discovering a diffident, scrupulous, incredulous disposition ; and his kind master administering a just and seasonable rebuke : “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith



unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, shew us the Father?" Thus was it needful that the witnesses of the truth to others should have their own doubts completely removed. And thus, He, who knew what was in man, will bring out of the man himself what is in him; not with the insidious design of deceiving and exposing him, as men often act by each other, but of making him feel his own weight; of enabling him to form a just estimate of his wisdom and strength; of affording him a fresh and irresistible proof of his master's supreme power, and divine intelligence, "This he said to prove him: for he knew what he would do."

We have here a most sublime representation of the Redeemer's foreknowledge of the natural reasonings of the human mind, and of the existence and effect of second causes. That a thousand persons of as many different inclinations, pursuing as many different interests, with as many different capacities, should be brought to one point, should co-operate in promoting the same purpose, should, unknown to each other, involuntarily enter into exactly one and the same pursuit, is not to be explained on the common principles of human sagacity, and can proceed only "from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Philip immediately has recourse to arithmetical calculation; he estimates the multitude at so many, he examines into the state of their finances, and finds them deplorably deficient: "two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." No, the difficulty was not to be thus resolved. Neither was the matter much mended to human apprehension, when Andrew, Simon's brother, brought information that there was a lad present who had five barley loaves and



two small fishes to dispose of. He himself sets no great store by his intelligence ; a single loaf to a thousand men appeared to him a mere nothing, an aggravation rather than an alleviation of the distress : “ but what,” says he despondingly, “ are they among so many ? ” The case is thus brought to an extreme point. Five thousand men, besides a multitude of women and children, probably to an equal, if not a greater number, feel the pressure of hunger, and of no one of our natural appetites are we more acutely sensible than of this ; every one of this myriad, therefore, down to the youngest child, was a distinct and a competent witness upon the occasion, of the individual and of the general calamity, and of the total want of an adequate supply. Providence thus frequently permits things to come to the very verge of woe, that man may feel his own weakness and insufficiency, feel his entire dependance, and learn to acknowledge and to adore the seasonable interposition of heaven ; that God may be seen as “ our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble.”

As if every preparation of human sagacity had been made, Jesus, with dignified composure, commands, saying, “ Make the men sit down.” The attention and sympathy of Christ are observable in minute circumstances. His guests had passed a day of uncommon fatigue ; they were now overtaken with two great infirmities, want of food and want of rest. A standing meal, weary as they were, would have been an unspeakable benefit ; or to have stretched out their exhausted limbs to repose, even with a slender provision, for “ the sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much.” He who careth for oxen, who feedeth the raven, who sustaineth the sparrow on the wing, “ shall he not much more ” hear the cry of human wretchedness ? Both the precious gifts of bread and rest are bestowed at once, and both unho-



ped for, both unasked. "Make the men sit down:" and it is remarked, "Now there was much grass in the place." What a delicious assemblage of natural and interesting beauties! It was the still evening of a day in spring; the fragrant fertile earth had spread an ample carpet, at once delightful to behold, pleasant to the smell, and softened to the pressure of the faint. Twenty thousand eyes are turned in silent expectation to their common friend and benefactor. The very order of their arrangement embellishes the scene, and the subdivisions and straight lines of art set off the majestic irregularity of nature: a hundred rows of fifty men each. What, compared to this, was the royal "feast which the king Ahasuerus made unto all his princes, and his servants: the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces!" What, compared to this, was the great, but impious feast, which "Belshazzar the king made to a thousand of his lords!" These noisy and profane revels were quickly disturbed, and issued in sorrow. What a different spectacle did the mountain in the desert of Bethsaida present! All is calmness and harmony, all is peace and joy. The great master of the feast surveys his vast family with complacency and delight! they behold in him their condescending teacher, their merciful physician, their liberal provider, their almighty Lord, in whom all fulness was pleased to dwell.

"And Jesus took the loaves." He miraculously supported his own body for forty days in the wilderness, without eating or drinking; and the same divine power could undoubtedly have refreshed and sustained this great multitude, for a night, without bread, as easily as by supernatural multiplication of it. But this would have been less sensible and convincing; and natural vigour of constitution might have been supposed equal to the load. In the method of relief which our Lord was pleased to employ, every man



had the witness within himself, and could bear a clear testimony concerning all around him, that not the powers of nature, but the God of grace had ministered to their common necessities. “And, when he had given thanks :” two different words are employed by the evangelists to describe this action of our Saviour. The first three say, “he blessed” the loaves, pronounced upon them a solemn and powerful benediction, in virtue of which they became prolific, and multiplied far beyond the extent of the demand. Our evangelist represents him as “giving thanks,” ascribing to God his heavenly Father the glory of every gift of an indulgent Providence, whether bestowed in the order of natural increase, or produced by an extraordinary interposition. The form of words, employed by Christ on this occasion, most probably blended both ideas, as indeed they cannot be easily separated. To give thanks for what God has given is a devout acknowledgment of dependance upon him, a tacit expression of hope in his goodness for the time to come, and the most likely means of increasing our store. He acted as the great pattern of his disciples, teaching them in difficulty to look up to heaven for direction and assistance, to improve the blessings of Providence by referring them to their great Author, and to cast every future care on him who hath helped hitherto. Man cannot pronounce a benediction capable of communicating efficacious virtue, but, what is equivalent to it, he can “in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let his request be made known unto God :” and time employed in devotion is not loss, but unspeakably great gain.

“He distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were set down : and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.” The fare was ordinary, barley bread and dried fish. “The full soul loatheth a honey-comb ; but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet.” Mark, the quality of the food is not



changed, the quantity only is increased, for the object of the miracle was not to pamper luxury, but to satisfy hunger. The disciples had nothing to give but what they first received. And what must have been their astonishment, their satisfaction, as they walked from rank to rank, to behold the food not diminish, but multiply to the mouth of the eater! No murmuring could arise on account of a partial distribution, for all had enough, and to spare. No doubt could arise respecting the fountain of supply, for every ear heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; every eye beheld his face lifted up to heaven, and his hands extended to diffuse plenty. The body and the mind were refreshed together, with food convenient for them. Thus seasonable, thus suitable, thus satisfying are the good and perfect gifts which come down immediately from the Father of lights. The self-same miracle, my friends, is repeated day by day, through a different process, and we observe it not, we feel it not. An unseen hand "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man:" it "bringeth forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." "O that man would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

"When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." There is a criminal forethought about to-morrow which the gospel condemns, because it implies distrust of the care, wisdom and goodness of Providence, and because it mars the enjoyment, and encroaches upon the duties of to-day. But there is likewise a prudent and pious forethought, which both reason and religion highly approve and powerfully recommend, because it is the co-operation of human sagacity with the benignity of Providence; and the hap-



piest and most honourable condition of man is exertion, as if no supernatural aid were to be expected, and reliance on God, as if human efforts amounted to nothing. "Gather up the fragments:" was the command of him who had the power of multiplying without end, but who would lay himself under no obligation to exert an extent of miraculous energy to repair the profusion, or supply the negligence of thoughtless man. What occasions the present dearth of every necessary of life? Not the unkindness of heaven, for the earth has yielded her increase, and our garners are full; but cruel oppression on the one hand, and abominable waste on the other. The precious fruits of the ground are, contrary to nature, hoarded up in expectation of glutting avarice with a higher return, till they corrupt; or they are vilely cast away by the minions of opulence and grandeur, who care not what they destroy, because the master's fortune is able to support the expenditure. It is one, and not the least of the evils of war, that of the provision necessary to the maintenance of fleets and armies, one half at least goes to loss, through dishonesty, carelessness, and wilful prodigality. This profusion is often found in company with a hard and stony heart. It appears to have constituted great part of the criminality of the rich man in the Gospel. He "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." But this was not in itself sinful, nor is it charged upon him as guilt. The offal of his table was not wisely used. While detestable luxury reigned within doors, the cry of misery at the gate was disregarded. The beggar Lazarus desired, but desired in vain, "to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." It is in every man's power to reduce the price of provisions. Let him purchase no more than what is needful, and let him be careful to look after the fragments which remain. The opulent man is responsible for the inhumanity, the extravagance, the criminal neglect



of his domestics, and to no purpose does he exclaim against the rapacity of combinations to engross and enhance, while he is fostering the mischief by the wretched economy of his own household. "Let nothing be lost" is the economy of nature, the maxim of true wisdom, and a precept of christianity.

"Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Thus the miracle was complete; ample provision was made for the moment, and a lesson of prudence given for all generations. The bodies of thousands were refreshed by homely but wholesome food, and the sacred impress of divine truth was applied to the human heart. Thus transitory things are rendered permanent, and provision made for supporting the body is converted into food for the immortal soul.

The conviction produced was perfectly natural, and it operated uniformly on the minds of the whole assembly: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." There was therefore, it is evident, a generally prevailing expectation of the appearance of the august personage whom the prophets had announced; and what proof of a divine mission more illustrious could be displayed, than that which had just reached the understanding through all the avenues of sense? But it is truly humbling to observe the perpetual intrusion of a worldly spirit. *That* prophet whom all ranks looked unto and waited for, all ranks thought proper to invest with temporal power and splendour. The idea of raising him to kingly supremacy is immediately entertained. What quality could a prince possess that led more certainly to success than that of subsisting his armies, without the expense and incumbrance of magazines? Under this impulse the multitude are



disposed instantly to rear his standard, and to enlist in his service. And when a man faithfully examines himself, he will find that the world, in some form or another, is lurking in his heart. He will find time, and sense, and self blending with his purest, most generous, most exalted views, and directing his most seemingly disinterested exertions. Jesus demonstrates that he is much more than a king, by withdrawing from popular applause and proffered royalty. "When he perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." He meets and relieves their real necessities, but retires from their projects of power and ambition. To the demand of Pilate, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" this was his modest reply: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

We conclude with a few practical reflections.

1. The law of man's nature is a stated religious monitor to him. Every day he hungers, he thirsts, he waxes faint, he must lie down and go to sleep. He is as often admonished of his frailty, of his dependance, of his obligations. Let the animal functions be ever so little deranged or suspended, and the whole man, spirit as well as body, pines and languishes. An eye which never slumbers nor sleeps watches him by night and by day. An unseen hand spreads his board, fills his cup, feedeth him with food convenient for him. A careless spirit overlooks common mercies, lightly esteems them, wastes, perverts, abuses them. And where the hand of God is not seen, felt and acknowledged, there can be no enjoyment superiour to that which the beasts of the field have in common with the rational creation. The devout spirit refers all to Deity, and thereby a relish is communicated to the simplest and most ordinary things. "A dinner of herbs where



love is, a dry morsel, and quietness therewith," far exceed the luxury of the "stalled ox," and of "a house full of sacrifices." Herein the poor have infinitely the superiority over the rich and great. Hunger seasons the poor man's food, thirst sweetens his cup, labour softens his couch. He beholds his daily supply coming from the bounty of a Father in Heaven, he gives God thanks. Thus meditates the Psalmist in contemplating the providential care exercised over all creatures, especially those of the human race: "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches: So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works." Thus is the eye of man, from day to day, alternately directed to the ground out of which he himself was taken, to behold the support of his life likewise springing up out of it, and to heaven, toward "the Father of lights," for, "every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above." God, in his great mercy, has not entrusted to human reason the preservation of the body, but constantly warns him by an animal instinct of what his frame requires, and renders that savoury to sense which he knows to be necessary to life; and thus pleasure and duty, as they ever ought, go



hand in hand. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men; for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

2. If God is pleased to humble man, and to suffer him to hunger, it is to "make him know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." In the animal part of his nature he is reduced to the level of the beasts that perish; in his spirit he rises to the rank of angels, he draws supplies immediately from the Father of spirits, he feeds on immortal food, he drinks of the "pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The christian, like his divine master, has meat to eat which the world knows not of. "My meat," says he, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work:" and, speaking of his doctrine, in contrast to the support and refreshment of the natural life, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life:" and again, under the same image of necessary food; "My father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The believer's feast is thus described by one who was a liberal partaker of it: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,



and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us ;” and in another place, “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

3. In proportion as this spiritual appetite increases, attachment to the world will diminish. Nature, says the proverb, is satisfied with little, and grace with still less. The disciple of Jesus knows and feels that he has here no continuing city, and therefore seeks one to come. He “ coveteth no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.” While the rich worldling is pulling down his barns and building greater, in which to bestow his fruits and his goods, laying up treasure for himself without being rich towards God, the follower of Christ is employed in laying up “ treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” He desires “ a better country, that is a heavenly :” he looks for “ a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” His master has taught him, when he prays, to say not, “ give me much goods to be laid up for many years,” but “ give us this day our daily bread :” “ my heavenly Father knoweth what things I really need.” He knows that the day of the Lord cometh, “ in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent



heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." He, according to the promise of God, who cannot lie, "looks for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Hence he learns "in whatever state" Providence may be pleased to put him, "therewith to be content." "I know," says Paul, "both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Brethren, the time is short, it remaineth, that they who weep be as they who weep not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

4. Let the ministers of Christ remember that they are "stewards of the mysteries of God," and that "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." That which they deliver to others, they themselves received from the Lord. There is one and the same fare provided for them, and for their fellow servants, and the provision is at once excellent and abundant. Every one is entitled to the portion most suitable to him, and in the proper season. "New born babes," in Christ, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." In various ways may a steward be found unfaithful to his trust. He may be negligent, and then the household runs into confusion and every evil work; every one does that which is right in his own eyes, and of consequence every thing goes wrong. He may withhold what is due, and the family starves. The food may be improperly mixed, and thereby changed into poison. He



may be injudicious, and the aliment of the healthy and vigorous is administered to the puny and feeble, while the delicate nourishment that suits sickliness and imbecility is presented to maturity and strength. He may be deliberately wicked, and betray the trust which he was appointed to guard. As a contrast to this melancholy picture, turn your eyes to the portrait of that faithful steward, and able minister of the New Testament, the apostle of the Gentiles, in the solemn appeal which he makes to the elders of Ephesus, on bidding them a final farewell; “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God—remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears—I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.” But there is an appeal still more solemn and affecting, and in circum-



stances infinitely more interesting, that of the chief Shepherd himself, addressed to his heavenly Father, in the near prospect “ of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,” “ I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: for I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” “ Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”

5 Let not the constant and regular operations of Deity, in the course of nature and providence be overlooked, like the people who “ did eat of the loaves and were filled,” we take and enjoy the repast, but discern not the miracle which produced it. The naturalist traces the progress of vegetation as an amusement, as a branch of science. The husbandman pursues it as his destined occupation, he casts seed into the ground, leaves it there and goes to sleep, observes it day after day springing and growing up, he knoweth not how; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, but his eye and his heart are all the while set on the time of putting in the sickle, when the harvest is come. The eager merchant too watches the process, as a commercial speculation, as favourable or unfavourable to his plans of buying, and selling, and getting gain. With what a different eye does a devotional spirit contemplate Deity spreading a table for every thing that lives! The Christian considers the fare upon his own board, whether simple or sumptuous, flowing in what-



ever channel, coming from the east, or from the west, from the south, or from the north, as a supply immediately furnished by the hand of his heavenly Father, as children's bread, as a foretaste of the rich provision of his Father's house above.

This communicates to ordinary things a relish unknown to the banquets of the luxurious and the proud. With the five thousand he beholds his God in person feeding him. He passes from the table which he calls his own, and at which his divine Master sat as a guest, though invisible, to that which Jesus emphatically calls his, and he finds it replenished "with all the fulness of God." He eats and is satisfied, he goes on his way rejoicing, he advances from strength to strength, he mounts up as on eagles' wings, he runs and is not weary, he walks and faints not. Thus may every one of us in the Zion that is above appear before God. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

THE END.























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